

SMITH'S

MAGAZINE

MAR. 1918 • 15 CTS.



BY
RESSLER

BEST STORIES OF THE MONTH

Coming Next Month

SMITH's is very happy to tell its readers of a treat in store for them—and a *three months'* treat, at that. After months of effort, we have been so fortunate as to secure the latest story of one of the most clever and deservedly popular of all modern magazine writers. Her work has appeared in SMITH's in the past. If you recall a certain short story called "Bridging a Distance," a two-part story, "Against the Wall," and a short serial, "The Great Perhaps," you will understand just why we have tried so hard and so persistently to get another serial from

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Vol. XXVI

No. 6

SMITH'S MAGAZINE

A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

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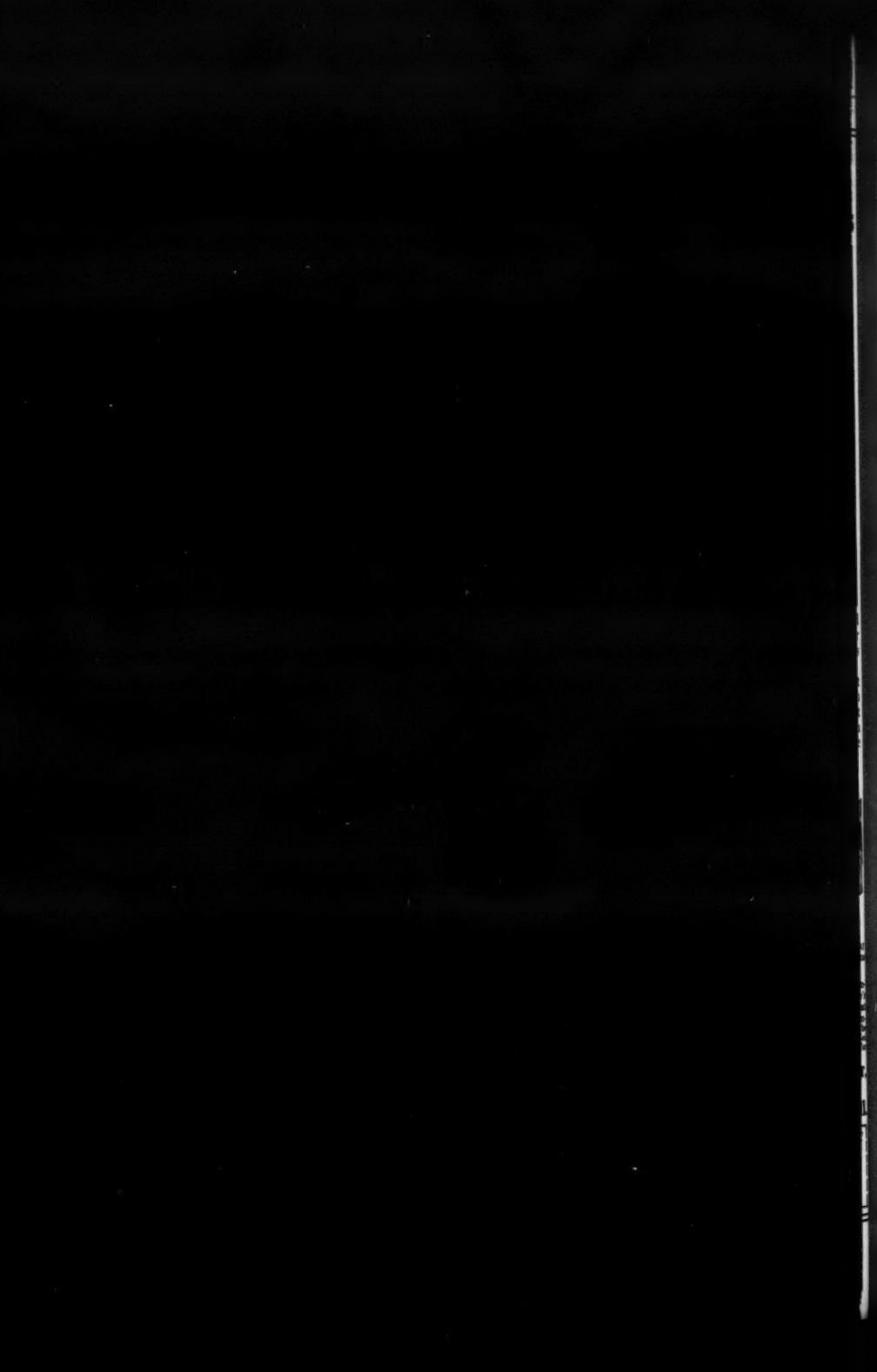
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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

Volume 26

MARCH, 1918

Number 6

V a l o r

By Joanna Rowe

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

"VALOR CONSISTS IN THE POWER OF SELF-RECOVERY"

**Read the story, with its most moving drama,
and recognize the truth in Emerson's words.**

AN ingrained horror of marriage, derived from familiarity with its uglier aspects, need not prove a hazard. But when to this aversion is added beauty of an unusually appealing type and an inherent independence of thought, the combination may spell danger.

Sheila Clavering's earliest memories were of adoration of her mother and distaste for her father. Clavering's strongest instinct was the sense of possession, of ownership. A perverse fate had led him to fall in love with the sort of woman who can never sacrifice her own individuality. She yielded herself to him, she bore him children until her health gave way because of the close succession of their births, yet something intangible and profound, something that is the very heart of marriage, Mavis Clavering did not surrender to the morose and passionate man who was her husband. In the early years of their marriage he might have won what afterward it was too late to win.

In his way, Clavering loved her, but the little Sheila was too young to see

anything beyond her father's constant upbraiding of her mother, his jealousy of her every interest in her books, her music, even her children. Of the six children, only two survived their babyhood—the oldest daughter, Rebecca, and the baby, Sheila. There were ten years between them. Rebecca was so like her Grandmother Clavering in mind and appearance that her mother had toward her the same feeling of conscientious effort to "do her duty to her," but Sheila was so lovely, so winsome, so responsive, that it seemed to Mrs. Clavering as if all the bleak places in her life had suddenly burst into song and blossoming. She could not bear to be separated from the child, so the little girl was not sent off to school, but kept at home in the country with her mother and Miss Patty, the adoring nursery governess.

Sheila was just fourteen when her mother's sudden death changed the face of the world for her. In the bewildered pain of that time, there was one memory that always had power to stab her afresh. It was the picture of Rebecca, standing grim and sullen by

her mother's bed and turning fiercely upon her sister.

"I obeyed mother always, and did just what she said, and was never late at meals or untidy. But she never taught you any rules. You've always done exactly as you liked, and whatever you did, she loved it. I was the best daughter, and yet she loved you the best."

Remembering the sense of constraint that had always seemed to fall upon their intimate talk when Rebecca or her father had been present, Sheila tried to say words of comforting:

"You were ever so much better than I was, Beck. Perhaps mother felt that you had George to care about you—and that I had only her."

With the sense of her own desolation blotting out everything else, she fell on her knees by the bed, her face against the slender, cold hand. Without replying, Rebecca left the room.

The years that followed were uneventful. Sheila was sent off to school, and Rebecca married George Wilkinson and moved to the bustling manufacturing town where he had his knitting mill.

Her father's death was hardly more than an incident in Sheila's life, but the years that had passed since her mother's death had materially altered her finances. Mavis Clavering had bequeathed her property to her daughters; a substantial brick store went to Rebecca and a large tract of barren land to Sheila. Clavering had suggested to Wilkinson that the property should be sold and the money divided, as the will was hardly just to Sheila, the store building being doubly as valuable as the waste land. His wife had stated, in the monograph will, that she left to Sheila the land in Durbar County "because on those wide, bare stretches, I first learned to love the sky. I think it is my passionate love for the sky that gave my little girl's eyes their look as if they saw only the far, fair spaces."

Wilkinson contended that the reason assigned for the division of the property might be sentimental, but it was legal, and Beck would hold to her store.

It irritated Clavering, tenacious always of his opinion. He had a dogged satisfaction, a year later, when a railroad was built through Sheila's property. He united forces with the land company who wished the tract as a site for a town, and the property doubled and trebled in value. Wilkinson came to him with the proposition to divide, as it was clearly contrary to her mother's intentions for Sheila's holdings to exceed Rebecca's, but it was Clavering's turn to refuse. Wilkinson, vulgarian and money-grubber to the core, had to see Sheila's property sold and the money invested in safe four-per-cent government bonds which gave her an income of six thousand dollars, while Rebecca's store needed a new elevator!

But there was still a way in which Sheila's money might help him. If she should marry his junior partner, Frank Fincham, she might be persuaded to sell the bonds and invest the proceeds in the new mill he wished to add to his plant.

At eighteen Sheila graduated and came to live with her sister. She dreaded it, for she had hated the vacations spent with the Wilkinsons, though she was fond of the two stolid, chunky children. Life with Rebecca and George brought the girl close to an uglier, more sordid side of marriage than she had seen throughout her childhood. Her father had been selfish, dominating, at times brutal, but in his way, he had had a passion for his wife. George and Rebecca were not in the least in love with each other, nor made the slightest pretence of being except in the presence of outsiders. He had married her because she was a healthy, vigorous girl who was far above him socially and could help him climb where

he wanted to go. She was homely, but he had wooed half a dozen pretty girls unsuccessfully. The Claverings had unchallenged social prestige; Rebecca was robust, economical, and a good housekeeper. Wilkinson was well satisfied with the match and continued to be.

Rebecca had never received any other proposal. She had realized that she was not attractive to men, and that soon Sheila would be grown—a beauty at whom everybody turned to look. She would not be an old-maid sister, not she! She had wanted the position of a married woman at the head of her own establishment, and George Wilkinson had been able to give it to her. So she had accepted him and was thoroughly satisfied with her bargain; and though she was always in fear that another child might be added to her already sufficient number of two, one had to take the disadvantages along with the advantages in married life.

The two quarreled as people do who must live closely together and who have not love to teach them courtesy and self-control. They disagreed about the servants, the meals, the lawn, the children, the furnace, or a game of cards. Yet there was between them a strongly



Her hazel eyes were dark with excitement and her cheeks deep rose. "Did you find me willful?" she asked.

defined sense of partnership; each needed the other to progress in the world. Divorce would have seemed as horrifying to them as a kiss would have seemed absurd. Sometimes Sheila, widely and not wisely read, felt sick and shuddering when she saw them go upstairs to their room. It was hideous for two people to sleep side by side whose waking thoughts were never in harmony except on the plane of material advancement.

Naturally Rebecca could not under-

stand Sheila's attitude toward Frank Fincham. He was blond, bland, and gentle, and the girl was rather fond of him, but she angered her sister by declaring that she had rather drown in sugared water than marry him.

Judge Burt—widower and Beau Brummel of the town—astonished Sheila by proposing. It was said that he made love by subtleties to every pretty debutante, but was careful never to commit himself. He lifted Sheila's slim fingers to his lips, and it surprised her to see that his hands were trembling.

"I don't know what it is about you, you little witch! You possess me!"

Something glittering and yet cold in his eyes made her think of her father, and she drew away from him, frightened.

There were half a dozen nice boys who laughed and danced and flirted and made love to her, and her first winter passed swift as a breath. She was nineteen that April—the April she met Kenyon.

II.

Kenyon had come to that part of the country because it was the scene of a book that he was illustrating. At first he appeared aloof and indifferent to the social life of the town, where the doors of admission swung easily to a stranger of evident culture. It was at a dance at the country club, which he had rather reluctantly consented to attend, that his artist's eye singled out Sheila's delicate loveliness and distinction.

"Why, she has the coloring of a Romney portrait!" he thought amazedly. "And what a carriage—free and proud and unconscious! How does that creature of fire and dew exist in this bourgeois environment?"

Fincham introduced him, poor Fincham!

Sheila saw a man, tall, lean, distinguished, with a slight touch of gray

on his temples and with tired gray eyes. She had never heard a voice so delightful as his. The first sound of it seemed to make a chord vibrate within her.

They danced, a long, swift ecstasy of motion, in silence. In silence he led her upon the balcony.

"We *must* talk to each other," he said.

"But my card is full. I have engagements for every dance," she denied him regretfully.

"Tell them you've sprained your ankle or torn your frock or broken your heart—anything you like. But you must talk to me."

"I might cut just one," she capitulated.

The end of the evening found her with more partners than one to be reckoned with, and Fincham protested peevishly as he brought her wrap.

"You think you can always have your own way, Sheila, and do just as you like with men, but I tell you that you'll have to explain treating them as cavalierly as you did to-night. You're the most willful girl on earth."

She glanced over her shoulder at Kenyon. He coolly took her wrap from Fincham and folded it about her. Her hazel eyes were dark with excitement and her cheeks deep rose.

"Did you find me willful?" she asked.

"Yes, but our wills do not run counter," he answered.

Kenyon was a connoisseur in women. He was captivated by the girl's flower-like beauty, but it would not have held him in itself if he had not found that her personality piqued his interest. The courage that was her dominant characteristic arrested his attention; her ardent, inquiring mind occupied him. The girl was an omniverous reader, and she had browsed without restriction in her father's library. She had graduated from a school where more attention was paid to music and languages than to the fundamentals of

education, and with this insufficient groundwork, she had plunged into books on psychology, feminism, socialism, new religions, rehashed philosophies, modern plays—all the literature of revolt. Her mind was a seething tumult of unanswered questions. The men with whom she had been motoring and dancing all winter could have given no answer to the problems that interested her; they had nothing to fill the imperative demands of her seeking young mind. But Kenyon had come, and everything was changed to her.

After their first meeting, there was no longer any question of his aloofness, for he haunted every place where she could be found. Happy dreams enveloped her. She could close her eyes and see the wonderful light that came into his whenever he saw her. She called it love. They talked much of love and life. She found that the philosophies which she had been half afraid to read and had not dared to speak of were elementary to him. His belief in freedom outstripped her tentative questionings. His creed was freedom, individuality, self-development, the right to joy, to high adventure, to love. He scorned the pallid creed of self-denial; he called it soul starvation. He told her—but not at first; this was after they had advanced in "understanding"—that he would never insult the woman he loved by asking her to marry him. Marriage was the vulgarest of compacts, instituted by the parochial imagination and an affront to true lovers. Why make the bungling attempt to clip the wings of Love—"half angel and half bird"—and domesticate him as a barnyard fowl?

His voice thrilled her always with its exquisite cadences, its winning modulations. She was not convinced that he was right, though she could not match him in argument and he poked tender irony at her opinions.

There should be a time, he told her,

when love should rush out to meet love, wholly glad, wholly unafraid. In that great, imperative moment, perfect as a pearl, how banal to stop by the register of deeds and demand a bit of paper, when the skies and the stars were offering themselves as august witnesses! Listening to his theory—which was as yet impersonal and never for a moment applied to their individual lives—she was swayed by it, dominated by it, even though she dissented.

He had never frightened her by so much as a touch or a word of caress. Once, when he had seemed harassed, she had slipped her hand into his to comfort him, but he had kissed it gently and put it from him. It was his power of self-control that strengthened and justified her faith in him until she believed that whatever he did was right.

One evening they were returning from an *al fresco* supper at the fishing club, at which Fincham had been host. Sheila was sitting next to Kenyon on the back seat of Fincham's limousine, and Mrs. Wilkinson was with Fincham in front, as Wilkinson had been detained at home. There was some trouble with the lights, and Fincham got out to adjust it, rather curtly declining Kenyon's lazy proffer to help. Sitting there in the darkness close to Kenyon, a little shiver rippled over Sheila's body.

"Are you chilly?" he asked. "These June nights are treacherous. Is that better?"

From his casual tone, Mrs. Wilkinson might have thought he was readjusting the lap robes. Sheila felt herself suddenly drawn to him in a strong, compelling clasp. For a moment she held herself taut, and then she drooped against him, absolutely nonresistant, absolutely happy. His face touched hers in the darkness. She felt as if waves of light were breaking over her; she did not know whether it was an hour or ten minutes before the trouble

with the car was corrected and they were speeding on their way again. Whatever else life held for her, that brimming moment could never be repeated, when for the first time she felt the nearness of her lover—felt his hands tremble as they caressed her, his breath quicken as her own heartbeats were quickening. She was so utterly confident in the joy of their love that it never occurred to her that he had pressed an unfair advantage in taking her into his arms at a time when a murmur of protest would have been sufficient to arouse Mrs. Wilkinson's suspicions.

Sheila went to sleep that night as a child falls asleep on Christmas Eve, with a sense that it is the quickest way to hurry up the hours until morning.

She had promised to pour tea at a tiresome function the following afternoon. It seemed to her as if the very teacups were shaking from her unsteady hands when Kenyon came over to the table. At first she dared not look up at him, and then, with a tremendous effort, she made her eyes meet his. He looked cool, detached, bored, but the slightly humorous twist to his mouth showed that he was aware of her confusion. He moved aside to make room for some one else, as the room was crowded with guests. Sheila overheard the hostess directing one of the girls to offer him sandwiches.

"I'm scared to death of him," the girl protested. "He fascinates me terribly because he's so good looking and haughty, but he makes me feel like a small-town girl with her clothes made right here at home!"

It seemed to Sheila as if the night before was a dream—a "magic," as she had used to call her vivid imaginings in her childhood. He was not hers, this indifferent man of the world. How could an immature girl like herself hope to hold him?

But when she rose to go, she found

that he had waited to walk back with her. It was only a short distance, and he talked casually, ignoring the dumbness that held her.

"Don't—don't come in," she stammered when they reached the Wilkinsons' door, a queer panic possessing her as if she would run away from she knew not what.

"Not come in?" Under the careless question was the imperious ring she knew. "But I've waited an hour at that intolerably boring tea for the sole purpose of coming in with you."

She led the way into the parlor. He closed the door and came behind her, taking her in his arms and bending her face backwards. Lips and eyes and hair, he kissed her as a man who is parched with thirst might drain a brimming glass.

"I have hungered and thirsted for your kiss every hour of every day since I saw you, darling," he answered her unvoiced appeal.

She denied it tremulously:

"But our long hours when we talked of everything! You weren't thinking of kissing me then!"

"Was I not, little wise witch?" He crushed the question against her lips.

She was all bewilderment and wonder. Realization was so sweet to her innocence that she could not guess how anticipation might whet a jaded appetite.

There were times in the next few weeks when they would talk for hours in the old, intimate way, and then suddenly he would seem as if possessed by a whirlwind of emotion. Sheila was so honest in her love that she would have felt it treachery to her own soul to deny the force that possessed her and cowardice not to respond to him as naturally and gladly as she felt.

Then, out of the clear blue sky of her happiness, came the thunderbolt of her brother-in-law's edict. Kenyon must cease paying devoted attention to

Sheila; he must not come to the house again. Not only was her conduct cutting her off from the desirable Fincham, who was sulking, but there was a definite suspicion gathering in the town against Kenyon. He was very slow in paying his bills; he had borrowed money promiscuously; he had been unable to meet a note at the bank. That was the unpardonable sin to Wilkinson, and he blustered that it was his home, and so long as he was master there, he would protect Sheila from adventurers and fortune hunters.

Sheila listened to his edict, white lipped, silent, cold with anger. It was intolerable that this noisy vulgarian should have power to choose her friends. Yet she hated strategy of any kind; she felt an ethical distaste for concealment. So, for a week, she did not see Kenyon, though he wrote to her every day and she went to sleep with his letter against her cheek. Then he wrote demanding that she should see him and at once, as he was to leave town the following day. The proud fiber in her responded to the fact that he *demanded*, that he asked nothing. Equal to equal, he claimed his human right to see the woman he loved. But if she was the puppet of the commonplace little person who happened to have married her sister, if she was willing by her inaction to further their plan of marrying her to the wholly commendable Mr. Fincham, if she did not own herself, body, soul, and mind, he did not care to see her again, and he would accept their separation in silence. All her sense of personal liberty responded to him, as well as the deeper yearning of which she herself was hardly aware.

She wrote him that she would see him that night. Her note contained but a single line:

There is a dance to-night to which I have promised to go. Meet me afterward at the Place of Quiet Lovers. SHEILA.

It was his name for the odd trysting place at which they had spent many hours all summer. Rebecca's home was on the edge of town, surrounded by large grounds. It was horribly snug and complacent, with its concrete walks and drives and its clipped shrubberies. Kenyon shuddered over the grounds, but he loved the one spot in it that was an eye-sore to the Wilkinsons, though they had a conventional reverence that kept them from disturbing it. In antebellum days, their home had been part of a big plantation, and a corner had been reserved for the family burying-ground, as was the custom on Southern plantations. Only two graves were in the square inclosure, which was not much larger than a room and was surrounded by cedars like a wall. On one stone, gray with age and sunk deep in the ground, was the inscription:

Melissa Devane,
Wife of Robert Devane,
1804-1829.

Would that I had loved thee more!

The other stone bore only the name and date:

Robert Devane,
1797-1854.

No one now living in the town knew more of them than that the young wife had died and that Devane, who had never remarried, had died the year before the home place had been burned.

The story had fired Kenyon's imagination.

"God, how he must have loved her!" he had said dreamily. "It's worth living and dying and years of loneliness to have loved once with such utter self-obliviation!"

Sheila's voice had had a ring of tender pride as she had answered:

"No one else here ever thought of it like that. They thought he must have mistreated her or been unfaithful or broken her heart in some way—that remorse inspired the line."

"Don't you see that it was love and



"He—he never told me that he was not married," Sheila's parched lips moved mechanically.

not regret, Sheila?" he had demanded impatiently. "To be swept away on a current of feeling so strong as that, even when death had cut between like an icy wind! The inscription on the stone—he didn't care whether men understood it or wondered or gaped; he carved it for *her*! He flung out that message to her on the winds of the world! For he loved her so that no love was adequate, no love he could offer seemed to him worthy! I think perhaps those lovers like us to come

here, Sheila, to their little cedar-walled, grass-floored room. We'll make it our trysting place—the Place of Quiet Lovers."

So when the necessity came to see him again, after the week of loneliness, turmoil, and distress, like a homing bird her heart flew to the quiet spot which no feet but theirs ever entered.

The dance seemed to her interminable; interminable the length of time before the sounds in her sister's room above relapsed into silence, punctuated

by Wilkinson's heavy breathing. It was past one o'clock, a warm, fragrant August night, when she was at last free to let her footsteps follow her heart and run to seek him who waited. There was no moon, and in the darkness she ran straight into his outstretched arms. He held her to him, pouring out words of passionate love and longing.

"I've been the loneliest soul in the world all these years," his vibrant voice wooed her, his cheek against hers. "I've been solitary before you came. There was no one whose thought echoed mine, whose heart beat like a pulse of my own. Then you came into my life like white light, my magical one, my star spirit!"

"It is wonderful—so wonderful," she whispered in her happy young voice, "that you never loved anybody before you met me, that you, who are so much older than I am, should just have waited for me until I came! It's natural that I love you, as natural as the response of earth to sun and dew, but when I think of your waiting austere years before I came, I am humbled, I am humbled! I feel that I can't be wise enough or good enough, or love you enough, to make up for those long years when my lover waited for me!"

Something he was stifling stirred with shame at the absolute trust of the young soul he had awakened.

"A new love creates a new virginity," he muttered, more to answer his own compunction than to her, but she did not understand the words.

He held her in his arms in the little Place of Quiet Lovers. The cedars could not make the shadows darker, for it was a black night which heralded a storm. The electricity in the air tingled through their bodies.

"Love is not shackling; love is free giving," he murmured to her. "Love is the joy of spending one's self in the moment of complete understanding.

You belong to me, dear. You are mine by the right of your own beautiful gift of love, and yet you are not mine the breath of a moment longer than you choose it to be so, proud and free spirit. I would hold you only by your will. A gossamer thread light enough to delay the flight of a butterfly is too heavy a fetter for love. To-night you are my wife, Sheila, my wife!"

She could no longer grasp the meaning of words. Her whole being was quivering, responsive to his kiss.

He forgot that a hand's breadth away in the darkness Melissa Devane's grave bore testimony to a man's lifelong grief:

"Would that I had loved thee more!"

III.

Kenyon had told Sheila that he was forced to be away for a month. She was glad that it was so and that there was a space in which she could be alone. Her thoughts were hardly coherent, but she felt a swelling young pride that she had measured up to her lover's standard of the superwoman, who gives royally and splendidly when the hour has struck.

She came unexpectedly upon Kenyon on the street the morning of his return. The deep color flamed in her cheeks, and she could not speak. No one else chanced to be near.

"That is not like you, perfect one," he chided. "There is no shame in love. Let your beautiful, clear eyes meet mine, but I don't want to see the little red flag of shame in your cheeks."

She tried to rally, but no words came.

"To-night?" he asked. "At the same place, dearest?"

She assented by a downward movement of her head. He smiled tenderly at the rise and fall of her quickened breath, and murmured:

"My precious little girl!"

As she walked on alone, she wondered if any other woman in all the

world had a lover with a voice that played upon one's soul like the wind on a harp.

Though Fincham, who called that evening, found Sheila so distraught that he left in a huff, she waited for an hour after the house was silent before she went to the Place of Quiet Lovers. Something shy and reluctant held her back. She remembered how her feet had fled over the grass to meet him a month before, but between the two nights lay knowledge.

He who was so quick to understand her knew why she lagged, why she came toward him with that palpitating diffidence. It vanished when she felt his arms around her again, though he frightened her a little by the very intensity of his caresses.

"I've passed through weeks of hell without you!" he cried. "I shouldn't have returned to-day—there were imperative reasons—but I couldn't stay away from you another hour! I couldn't wait any longer for you, my life!"

She answered, limpidly candid always:

"It's as if I am with you every waking moment. I'm glad when I go to my room at night because I can shut my eyes in the darkness and think I can hear your voice; and I'm happy when I awake because I'm young and I love you and another beautiful day has begun, and my spirit seems flying to greet yours on the wings of the morning. The very first moment I am awake, I run to my window and say, 'Good morning, Paul!' and I play to myself that a jolly little sunbeam or an accommodating little breeze will carry my greeting to you."

"You have missed me, you have wanted me? When I caught the first glimpse of you this morning, before you saw me, it seemed to me as if you were paler than I had ever seen you, dearest."

"I—I fainted yesterday for the first time in my life. I was going to tell you about it after a while——"

He recoiled as if struck, then murmured a few words that at first were unintelligible to her. Then she understood him—with horror:

She moved out of his arms, and her eyes grew wide and terrified as he explained his meaning further. He was glad that she accepted his point without argument or discussion. Another sort of woman might have made difficulties. She was so young, so malleable, so exquisite! She filled every demand of his pride and his passion.

He put out his arms to draw her to him again, but she seemed to slip from him like moonlight. Her face was as the face of the dead.

"You've hurt me," she said, in a voice from which all the youth had gone, "my faith in you—everything. I shall never see you again. Go away. I wish that I were dead!"

He caught her by the arm, but she tore her sleeve from his grasp and fled from him. Stumbling, he fell across the sunken slab of Melissa Devane's grave. He recovered and ran after Sheila, but already she had gained the house. He heard the door shut and the key turn in the lock.

All night Sheila sat by the window, staring out into the darkness, shivering and cold from the impact of her own horror. She learned that love can be quiveringly, agonizingly alive even when faith is killed. His low, glad laugh as he took her in his arms, the note of his voice when he was tired, his sudden moods of anger or disdain—memories tore at her heart and gripped her with a pain that seemed to rend her. There must not be a child, he had said; there must never be a child, and so there was no necessity for marriage. How soft and alluring the cadence of

his voice as he had explained that only fools pay that price for love!

Disgrace, flight, loneliness, all seemed less to her than the crucial fact that she could no longer believe in the man she had trusted with her whole heart. Phases of life with which she would not otherwise have been familiar because of her youth were known to her because of her omniverous and unchartered reading. Out of the blackness of despair, out of the new, scorching sense of shame, one thought gradually shaped itself—she had ruined her life, she had thrown away the flower of her womanhood, but if her violated body was the custodian of a new, innocent life, she must guard it.

"I've been a bad woman," she whispered to herself over and over. "Can I learn to be a good mother? Can I be such a good mother that my baby will ever forgive me for not being—good?"

Sheila remained alone in her room all day, but late in the afternoon Rebecca came in with the evening paper. She was in a state of tremendous excitement.

"Sorry you have a headache, Sheila, but you ought to hear what is in the paper. Now you will see how George and I always have your real interest at heart, though you were inclined to take the part of an adventurer against your own flesh and blood. Now you can see what he is!"

She held out the paper. Sheila stared blankly at the headline.

"Don't you see, Sheila? He's a married man, and he's been posing as a bachelor all winter! Isn't that dishonorable enough? I dare say he has been making love to you—a married man! His wife has entered suit against him for divorce on account of his flagrant misconduct with a young art student. If George hadn't been careful, Sheila, your name might have been mixed up with this disgusting scandal! Fancy

that! Pretending he was a single man!"

"He—he never told me that he was not married," Sheila's parched lips moved mechanically. She spoke more to herself than to her sister.

"Oh, take his part by all means!" Rebecca derided indignantly. "I dare say you're in love with him!"

"No, I don't love him any longer. I'm glad of that, because he can't hurt me any more than he has already hurt me."

"What do you mean?" cried Rebecca shrilly. "What makes you look like that? Sheila! Sheila?"

The name rose in a piercing question too terrible to be voiced.

Rebecca remembered afterward the look Sheila gave her, direct, unfaltering, agonized.

"I've given myself to him. I don't know, but it's possible that I may have a child."

Quite clearly, almost apathetically, she brought out the incredible words—and then she fainted.

Against her will, Rebecca must needs be silent for several days because Sheila was too ill to listen to reproaches.

Mrs. Wilkinson determined not to tell George, foreseeing the ascendancy it would give him in matrimonial discussions since it was her family that had been disgraced. Her social superiority was too strong an advantage for her to surrender because of Sheila's madness.

The following week she considered that Sheila was strong enough to listen to reason. The girl lay in bed, white as the sheet at which her fingers plucked restlessly.

"Sheila, you must try to rally. Get up to-night and dress—you can put a little rouge on; I've got some upstairs—or else Frank Fincham will think you are grieving over that rascal. He

slipped out of town owing everybody money. Frank is crazy about you, and he's been here every day to see how you are, and the thing for you to do is to marry him *right away*. You're probably all wrong about—about that possibility, but you can't afford to wait. You can't dare take any risk, Sheila. And there's Frank, a fine fellow any girl might be proud of and one who'd ask nothing better in the world than to marry you to-morrow. You might run off and say you hate the fuss of a big wedding——"

"Beck, you can't mean what you say! I'm not a thief, to steal Frank Fincham's name and give it to Paul Kenyon's child!"

"There's a worse word than thief, in spite of your high and mighty airs," Rebecca said darkly. She felt as if she hated this girl who dared to take that superior stand with her, a properly married woman!

"Then there's nothing left for you to do, Sheila, but to prevent the child's coming."

"That is what *he* said," murmured Sheila. For a moment her life seemed to sink into an abyss of anguish. "All through the long hours of these long nights, I've heard his voice as he told me what to do. But if I stabbed a defenceless person out in the open, it would be murder; and if I stabbed him hidden behind a curtain, it would be murder; and if I stabbed through the curtain, not sure that any one was there, but meaning to kill if he was, it would be murder. Oh, Beck, I can't do anything to kill my little defenseless baby! I couldn't ever hope to have mother still love me if I did that. Don't you remember how she loved babies, Beck? My child has the same right to life that I have, that you have, that your children have."

"Don't you dare mention your possible bastard in the same breath with my children!" Rebecca's face was



The children knew her, for they smiled in goats, the sturdy young moun-

livid with fury. "Then, if you are too fine to be a 'thief' and marry a nice fellow, or too dainty to be a 'murderess' and keep a poor illegitimate child from being born, may I ask *what* you are going to do? You don't stay here! Remember that, Sheila! You don't stay here to disgrace us all!"

Sheila's voice came as if from a great distance, very wearily:

"It's the last place on earth in which I should choose to stay. I've been try-



greeting and began to chat with her in their pretty patois. It made a pretty picture—the white taineers, and the fair-haired little girl.

ing to make my plans as I've been lying here thinking, thinking. I shall go abroad. Dear Miss Patty will go with me, I know."

Rebecca breathed a sigh of relief. After a moment's thought, she added:

"When Kenyon's wife gets her divorce, he can marry you. It's his duty."

"To make an honest woman of me?" Sheila inquired, with the faint ghost of a smile on her pale lips. "He can't

do that. I should only dishonor myself."

The terrible loneliness of her position smote her heart. Rebecca and she spoke a different language and lived as far apart in spirit as if they were inhabitants of different planets.

"You won't come back, Sheila? It isn't for myself I'm asking it, but a mother has to be careful of her children's position in the world. All can be hushed up without any scandal if it

is just said that you have gone abroad to study music, as you've often talked of doing. You won't come back here?"

"Never." Even to the unimaginative Rebecca, something in the low-spoken word sounded as if chiseled in granite. "But you'll have to be patient with me for a few days, Beck, until I can get my strength back. I must write to Miss Patty and wait until she can make her plans. She's very unhappy where she is, and I've been begging her all winter to give up her position and let me take care of her. Please, please don't talk with me about it. I must be at my best when I go. Then you will never have to be troubled with me again. Miss Patty can let you know if—if I die."

She made a slight gesture. Weak as it was, it was imperative, and Rebecca found herself outside the door, impelled by the force of it. Then she felt indignant.

"Sheila's high and mighty airs! She seems to forget she's in *my* house, in *my* room! Dismissing me as if I were the housemaid!"

She stopped short, arrested by the sound of terrible, strangled sobbing, of one cry reiterated over and over.

"Mother, mother! I need you! Where are you, mother? It's Sheila who wants you. Oh, mother, I loved him so! I've been so *wrong*! Mother, *mother!*"

Rebecca put her hand irresolutely on the knob, then withdrew it and walked away.

Her lips were compressed in a hard, straight line.

IV.

"You're the most willful woman in the world, Sheila," said Edward Blair crossly.

His wife looked up from the child's frock she was embroidering and demanded placidly:

"Are you going to quarrel with

Sheila again? You know I've always spoiled you, Ed, and you're so accustomed to having your own way that it's a good thing for you to meet your match."

"I'm a 'mush of concession' beside this pig-headed young person," he declared. "I only have my way now on alternate Wednesday afternoons from four to five."

"If it was a Wednesday on which you decided that we should come here, I'm grateful to the day," said Sheila, as it was at Blair's suggestion that they had come to Baveno, before going into Switzerland for the summer. "I think Maggiore is the loveliest of the Italian lakes. The water is so fresh and clear and the distances such a soft sky blue that it looks like a newborn lake, guarded by friendly mountains."

"I'm not to be cajoled by praises of my favorite spot! That's a very tidy lake, and we get a very satisfactory view of it from this pergola, and the vines overhead have the grace to bear flowers without a headachy, stifling perfume. Admitted. But the subject under discussion is Geddes. Of course I did as Sheila asked me to do and told him her—her—what she asked me to tell him, but I also informed him that it was Sheila's idea and not mine and that I thought it confoundedly arrogant and impertinent for two men to be discussing her affairs, and I wished him to understand that I was not submitting Sheila to a board of censors, as it were, to be passed upon."

Ann Blair glanced up with affectionate approval of the tenderness behind the scolding words.

"But you see, Ann dearest," Sheila appealed to her, "that I couldn't consent to make a fourth in your party all summer unless Doctor Geddes knew"—she paused a moment and then went on with it clearly—"that by all recognized standards, I am outside the pale. Because you two believe in me and give

me your wonderful friendship doesn't change the place to which the world would assign me."

"I can't see that our 'protection,' of which you talk prettily at times, amounts to anything whatever if you have to make a father confessor of a stranger," grumbled Blair.

"But Donald Geddes isn't really a stranger to Sheila when he is our best friend," objected Ann. "Perhaps Sheila wants you to tell her what he said, Ed."

"He made a remark about Kenyon rather too robust for me to repeat to you, and then he immediately changed the subject. There is no need, Sheila, for you to open it with him or with any one else. I wish you would be guided by my judgment about this."

"Don't you see, Edward, that it wasn't quite honest to let him accept me as your friend and be with us intimately all summer and not *know*? You told me Doctor Geddes said he had been in Europe often for study, but never for sheer rest and idleness, and that he put himself in your hands for his vacation. How could I accept daily association with any one who might choose it to be otherwise if he knew the truth? From a chance remark of his, I realized that he thought I was widowed, and for me to have accepted it without contradiction would have been—protecting myself with a lie."

When that wistful undercurrent of pain crept into Sheila's voice, tender Ann Blair took refuge in flight.

"I must find Mavis and see if this sleeve is the right length," she said, picking up her work basket and leaving the pergola.

Left alone with Sheila, the lines of vexation presently smoothed out of Blair's mobile, nervous face.

"Shall we go on with my manuscript, Sheila? I've rewritten the last two chapters."

She was all interest in a moment.

Her nature was so responsive that she made a sympathetic listener. Several times she put a question or made an incisive criticism, or he paused to elaborate the points of an argument. Once she was arrested by the sheer driving power of a phrase and broke into eager words of praise.

His eyes were alive with pleasure at her appreciation.

"That was the crux of the whole situation. The whole thought pivots there," he said eagerly. "I'm glad you recognized it, little sister."

Sheila made a restless movement of protest, and Blair laughed like a boy.

"What a stickler for words it is! So, though Ann and I cherish you as we would a younger sister, I mustn't call you by that word because you weren't born under the parental roof? Is that why your face suddenly went under a cloud?"

She nodded. Her voice was very low as she explained:

"Once Paul Kenyon called me 'wife.' Since then I've clung to plain speech. So I don't like you to say 'sister,' though I wish I were indeed your sister, Ed. But I do like 'friend,' because, ever since those days in Florence when I first met you and Ann, you two have taught me what a miracle friendship is." She broke off suddenly. "There's Doctor Geddes now."

He was a tall man, with a strong, rather stern face and a quick stride. As he came toward them along the flower-bordered path, Sheila stiffened involuntarily.

Something in that erect, braced attitude, as if she stood straight to meet a blow, seemed so poignantly sad to Geddes that he spoke of what he had meant to leave in silence.

"You are a very brave woman, Mrs. Clavering. Few of us have your courage and directness. I shall feel greatly honored if I may join you and the Blairs for the months in Switzerland. I

only know the beaten track, but Ed tells me that Chandolin is enchanting and your especial discovery, and I want to be introduced to its charms."

"On condition that you don't spoil Mavis," Sheila answered, trying to summon a smile. "Only yesterday she took a great fancy to a rainbow and announced confidently, 'My big doctor'll get it for Mavis.'"

Geddes laughed, glad to sweep the talk to shallow channels:

"I met Mavis and Miss Patty out for their morning walk. Miss Patty seemed to be earnestly expostulating with Mavis in regard to a particularly dirty little beggar, and very anxious for me *not* to join in the discussion. Evidently she, too, has seen that I have a weakness for your daughter."

Sheila looked so guilty that it was Blair's turn to triumph:

"You're a good diagnostician, Geddes. You put your finger on the sole drawback to a stay in Italy with Sheila. Beggars! If you think the fleas are thicker than the beggars in Rome, just take a stroll with Sheila. At first she gives openly and joyously; then, as I remonstrate gently, she gives surreptitiously; as I become a little firmer, the woman grows plausible and explains that a particularly agile somersault demanded a reward, quite in the spirit of the Olympian games, and the next beggar has a pinched look about his mouth, and the next can't possibly be repulsed because the poor little fellow looks as if he expected to be! If Mavis takes to giving like a small duck to its pond, *cherchez la mère!*"

Sheila was always helpless against teasing, and she looked openly relieved to see that Miss Patty and Mavis were returning from their walk. Blair threw up his hands in surrender.

"Silenced! Miss Patty permits no aspersions on Sheila except her own. She will threaten Sheila with pneumonia, tuberculosis, and lingering death

if she goes out without her rubbers on a cloudy day, but let one of us suggest that if Sheila had done as we told her to do and carried an umbrella, she wouldn't have soaked her prettiest suit, Miss Patty will lay the blame on 'this sneaking foreign climate.'"

Sheila was no longer listening. Her face was irradiated with gladness as she ran to meet Mavis. Mavis trotted toward her mother, her little arms outstretched, and Sheila lifted her in her arms and buried her face in the fair curls. Absorbed in the child, she was unconscious of the two men who were watching her.

But unexpectedly, as they looked away from Sheila, their eyes encountered, and the eyes of one man were grave and those of the other hostile.

V.

Sheila liked to walk some distance from the hotel as sunset approached, that she might watch the Alpine glow rest on those ineffable peaks without hearing the guests on the piazzas praise it as if it were a star performance given for their benefit. She had spent four months of every year here since Mavis was born, so this quiet inn on the mountainside was more like home to her than any other spot.

Her eyes rested lovingly on the distant beauty, with that look of which her mother had spoken—"as if she saw only the far, fair spaces." Between the snows of the Rothhorn and the Obergabelhorn were the dark rocks of Besso, and against the horizon the dominant Matterhorn flung its defiance to the skies. Far below lay the Val d'Anniviers, veiled in the mist that was creeping over the lowland, and huddled under the brow of the nearest hill was the village, with its nests of little brown chalets.

But Mavis was occupied with sights and sounds immediately at hand, and she made imperative demands upon her



"Good-by, my little daughter." He lifted Mavis in his arms and kissed her passionately.

mother's attention. The tinkle of bells heralded the approach of a herd of goats. A barefooted boy was the herdsman, and with him were a small brother and a rosy-cheeked sister. Mavis, who was utterly without fear, ran forward to the goats. The children knew her, for they smiled in greeting and began to chat with her in their pretty patois. It made a charming picture—the white goats, the sturdy young mountaineers, and the fair-haired little girl.

Kenyon would have been less than the clever artist that he was if he had

not instantly grasped the "points" of the picture.

Sheila's back was turned to him, and she was too engrossed with Mavis to notice that any one was approaching on the path behind her. Her near presence affected Kenyon more than he would have believed possible after the interval of five years. He had felt that he was on a fool's errand, but as he stood there watching the unconscious figure, the proud carriage of the head, the poise of the slender, graceful body, he said to himself, with sudden exulta-

tion, that there was no woman like her in all the world.

He waited silently until the goatherds had passed on down the slope of the hill towards the village. Mavis saw him first and greeted him with friendly compassion because he had come too late.

"The little goats have all gone," she explained, "all gone home to go to sleep, but I'll pick you some flowers."

Sheila turned with a smile to see who was the newcomer. Her face changed, but there was no fear and no emotion in the lift of her chin or in the words that cut the air coldly:

"You! Why have you dared come here?"

"Is that all the welcome you have to give me, Sheila?" The wonderful, vibrating voice stirred memories of anguish too poignant to lie buried. "Listen, dear," he hurried on. "I thought you treated me cruelly that last night we were together, and in all the months that followed, there was no word from you, no answer to my letters. Then came the hitch about my wife's establishing a residency, so that it was a year before the divorce was granted. Our child—and remember, I did not know whether or not we had a child until your sister told me, just before I came over here to find you—would have already been born. I was sore and angry against you, Sheila, against my wife, against all women—and horribly bothered with money difficulties. Those are gone. I don't suppose you know that I have given up my old work and gone into cartoons. Somehow they've made a hit, and I am no longer annoyed by the financial side of affairs. These past few months, there has come into my life a restless longing to see you, Sheila, with the conviction that our love was the best and deepest I have ever known."

His words carried a sense of conviction because he himself always be-

lieved what he was saying at the time he said it. He had not mentioned that the affair for which his wife had gained her divorce had again flamed into ascendancy during these years until the fire in it had burned out; if he thought of it at all, it was as a matter of negligible importance.

"I located you through Mrs. Wilkin-son, dear. I went to her home and told her that my one wish in life was to marry you, and she got your address from your lawyer."

Mavis ran to him, her little hands full of wild flowers, yellow peas, bluebells, gentians, all pulled with the shortest possible stems.

"This little bitty star is blue," she said, looking up at him with her friendly eyes as she handed him a gentian, "and this"—she picked out a blown anemone, round and furry—"and this little flower is a puppy!"

He, too, saw the furry likeness and smiled, though his lips were ashen, for in the first tense moment of meeting Sheila, he had not looked closely at Mavis. He lifted her in his arms, and his eyes were mirrored in gray eyes, just the shape and color of his own. Her soft yellow curls, her straight nose, and the contour of her face were as familiar to him as his own face in the glass, for the child was a duplicate of a miniature made of him as a boy of four.

"My God!" he cried brokenly, burying his face in the soft curls.

Mavis patted his cheek.

"Don't cry!" she soothed, stumbling a little over the difficult "r" and trying to think of something to console him for missing the goats. "The sky will be pink soon. Just wait a tiny, tiny little time, 'cause the snow always gets pink when the goats go to bed."

Kenyon had never been as finely stirred in his selfish, epicurean life. His marriage had been childless, and now for the first time he held in his

arms flesh and blood of his very own. He put her down abruptly. The suffocation in his heart seemed more than he could bear. Mavis ran to where some flowering mosses beckoned. Sheila's glance followed her tenderly.

"Mavis thinks you look unhappy, and so she will bring you everything she can find until she can make you glad again. She can't bear to see any one look sad—for a moment. The Blairs call her 'Little Joy Girl.'"

He spoke hoarsely:

"She—she is exactly like my portrait as a child. There never was so marvelous a resemblance. I must have her in my life, Sheila, I *must*!"

Sheila regarded him sadly. Something in that quiet pity was as distant and as unattainable as the far-off summit of the Matterhorn.

"That is the child you directed me to kill," she said. "Once, for your convenience, you would have crushed out that life. She is the sunniest, the sweetest, the most radiant spirit I have ever known. She is all joy, all love! I gave her my mother's name, and it expresses her, for she is like a little song thrush—the baby you said must not be born."

"I was thinking of you," he pleaded. "Because I followed the law of the world in trying to save your name, is it right to shut me out of my child's life forever?"

"You shut yourself out, Paul, when you were her potential murderer. The door closed between your life and hers. I don't love you; you are to me as one long dead. My girlhood was killed in an hour. I can never again be your wife, as I believed myself to be your wife that night. Neither can I dare trust you as an influence in my little girl's life. I—I don't mean to sound harsh, but I entreat you not to make it harder for us by talking longer. Won't you please go?"

"I will not be dismissed like a dog!"

he flamed. "Is there no forgiveness in your heart? Are you all granite hardness, Sheila?"

She looked surprised at that.

"Forgiveness?" she echoed. "Why, I've forgiven you long ago. There's nothing I wouldn't have borne"—her head lifted with the proud gesture he remembered—"because my lot, as it has been cast, means that I have Mavis, and she is life to me."

"I've lost all and gained nothing," he returned morosely. "You've had an easier lot than mine."

The smile that touched her lips at his words had more of retrospection than of bitterness.

"It has never been easy, Paul. Though Miss Patty came over with me, there were times when I seemed utterly alone in the world and my courage faltered. I was so young, and all the forces that generally protect a woman during the period of maternity were arrayed against me. I had to rebuild my creed of living. When I lost faith in you, it was hard for me to hold to my faith in anything, in anybody, but the *knowledge* of my precious mother sustained me. There were *lines* that I had once hear her repeat that came to me like her voice, and I used to say over and over in the darkness when all else seemed to have failed me:

"Thou art in God—and nothing can go wrong"

Which a new life pulse cannot set aright.

"But when Mavis came, I put despair behind me. I should have been ashamed to lapse into cowardice. I had to take the title 'Mrs.' because"—her cheeks flamed for an instant and then she stated the truth quietly—"because I am young, and men find me beautiful, and there must be about me the nameless quality of a woman who has broken through the safety bars. An American girl in Europe with a child and with no other family is the object of suspicion and sometimes of

pursuit. I have experienced both. My life has never been easy, but I hold it in dignity and self-respect. Everything has been simplified since the Blairs came into my life, with their faith and their protection. I met them two years ago in Florence, and we've been together the greater part of the time since. There was an epidemic of influenza that winter, and Ann Blair had a bad attack which was followed by pneumonia. She couldn't get a nurse who spoke English, and I nursed her through it. It was the most blessedly sweet privilege, for I had told them everything in my past, and they believed in me and loved me."

"But you won't need any other protection, darling, if you consent to marry me. Mavis will have a position which you cannot give her alone. As things are now, her status will become more and more ambiguous as time goes on. But we can marry and make our home in a different part of the States, and neither Mavis nor any one else need know when the marriage took place."

Sheila felt as if she were in actual physical pain, struggling through darkness that beat upon her like waves.

"I won't have Mavis live in an atmosphere of lies. She shall not be poisoned with sophistries. I don't love you and it would be immoral to be your wife, and no gain in 'position' to Mavis could compensate for the loss of spiritual fiber in her mother."

"Let Mavis answer that for herself when she is older! Wait until you face your half-grown daughter with the fact that she is illegitimate! In the hour when Mavis knows the truth about her birth, do you think she would prefer your 'spiritual fiber' to the knowledge that you are her father's lawful wife? If you marry me, she need never know the past, but if you persist in the stand you are taking, you may live to hear your daughter wish that she had never been born." His voice, harsh and

angry, broke into deeper feeling: "You stand so straight, Sheila! You always take a blow standing straight to meet it. Little fool, with your back against the wall, fighting against the traditions of the centuries, don't you know it's a useless fight? Little dear fool! Come to me, Sheila. Let's have done with quarreling. Life can yet be wonderful to us together, but apart—I am childless and you are nameless."

"I don't love you," she repeated dully, but she spoke with increasing difficulty. She felt oddly sick and weak, as if she were bleeding from an old wound, and her words seemed to be dragged from a distance. "Once I gave myself to you because I loved you. But to marry you without loving you or trusting you would be the final degradation. I can't do it, even if—even if Mavis grows to despise me."

"You deny me my own child!" he said roughly. "By the living Lord, I mean to have my own!"

The force that stirred him was so new, so foreign to him, he hardly realized that, even more than he desired this beautiful, baffling woman, he wanted the child whose face mirrored his own.

Mavis ran back to them, eager and happy. Her little fist was closed tight.

"He jumped and he jumped and he jumped," she explained breathlessly, "and Mavis wunned and she wunned and she wunned, and she caught you a nice little gwasshopper!"

She opened her fist and disclosed a somewhat fatigued grasshopper.

"Take it home with you and give it some supper." She parted heroically with her treasure. "Now the sky is pink!"

Far off, the Alpine glory touched the white peaks. Kenyon watched in silence as the rose color stained the snowy summits one by one. The child had slipped her hand confidently into his.

Involuntarily he was reminded of the young art student. She had had a way of slipping her hand into his. How young she had been when she had first began to trust him—a saucy slip of a girl with black eyes and a quick wit! She had had the sense of humor that Sheila lacked and which had fascinated Kenyon and drawn him back to her; she had stimulated him mentally as no one else did and it was she who had suggested the first series of cartoons that had brought him success. In what a reckless, headlong fashion she had loved him, and how bitter and broken she was! His wife had had a fresh prettiness when he had married her, and money which he had squandered. On Sheila, too, he had set his mark. Only a hard-won victory over pain could have changed the ardent, trusting girl whom he remembered into this woman who confronted him with pitying eyes. He had ruined the lives of the two women who still loved him; Sheila had escaped him because she had ceased to care for him. She had never been as wholly desirable to him as in the moment when he realized that she was lost to him forever.

"Sheila, have mercy! Be my wife!"

"Oh, Paul, I *can't*!" The words were barely audible.

There was a quality about the man that made him recognize the justice of the forces that parted them. It was the best and purest moment in his life when he accepted Sheila's decision.

"Then good-by, dear. Good-by, my little daughter."

He lifted Mavis in his arms and kissed her passionately.

As he turned away on the path toward the hotel, he walked like a man blinded and his shoulders looked stooped and defeated.

Presently Miss Patty came to take Mavis in to bed.

The lights in the hotel twinkled brightly, and one by one the lights in

the village were put out, but still Sheila sat alone in the night. She heard approaching steps and shuddered with dread that Kenyon had returned.

"Is that you, Mrs. Clavering?" called Doctor Geddes' voice. "The Blairs and I have been looking for you everywhere."

In the moonlight he saw her stricken face, and he dropped on the grass by her side.

"What is it?" he demanded with the quiet authority of the physician.

Since the day at Baveno when he had been told the facts in her life, the subject had never again been broached.

"Mavis' father has been with me," Sheila answered.

In a deadened voice, she repeated her conversation with Kenyon. Geddes did not speak, but once, when he saw her falter and shiver, he laid a firm hand on hers.

"Do you think I should have consented to marry him?" she asked when her story was done.

"I think it would have been a profound violation of the moral law. In a word, I think you would have sacrificed the higher ethics to conventions." He spoke abruptly. "Thank you for trusting me."

"You've helped me. It steadies me for you to believe that I was right. The Blairs are so good to me that their affection sways their judgment." She put her hand to her throat as if it were constricted. "The inescapable effect of my tragedy is that I've lost confidence in myself. I've known what it is to wander in such a maze of bewilderment and pain that I no longer have confidence in my decisions. I used to be so sure of myself; now I am no longer sure."

"I wish I could help you regain self-confidence. But nobody can help you there. All of us stumble, but the way of self-recovery is different for each individual soul." He stopped short. "I

want to help you—and I only am succeeding in sounding like a prig! Will you feel that I am a friend you and Mavis can count upon?"

Suddenly the control which Sheila was struggling to maintain gave way. In all his experience as a physician, Geddes had never seen any one so racked with sobbing.

"He thinks Mavis will never forgive me! He doesn't understand that loving little heart of hers! She will forgive, but some day she will have to *know*! She will have to suffer because of me, though I would die to keep her from suffering!"

Geddes did not try to check the strangling sobs. He could not lift the black shadows of the past, but somehow he made her feel his sympathy and understanding.

Presently she said:

"I'm all right again. I'm sorry I gave way like that. It's the first time since Mavis was born. I wasn't to go to Ann, please."

Geddes drew her arm through his as they walked toward the hotel, for Sheila stumbled from sheer exhaustion.

"I'm afraid Ann is anxious about you."

"Only my own mother has been so tender to me as Ann. Everything that womanly tenderness could give she has poured into my life."

"You have no truer friend, Mrs. Clavering. She's all faith and loyalty



to those she loves. Never lose sight of it." She felt the stifled passion in the hard, fierce kiss which Blair pressed on her lips.

Though Sheila was struck by a certain note of appeal in Geddes' voice, she was too weary to seek explanation.

She had no other opportunity to ask him, for she stayed in her room all next day to allow Kenyon to leave the hotel without seeing her again.

But she was surprised when Ann told her that Geddes had left good-by for her, as he had suddenly decided to go to Vienna that afternoon.



Ann, catching at a vase which a sudden gust of wind toppled over, cried to Geddes: "Oh, I was just in time to save it!"

VI.

The incredible conflagration which was to spread over Europe was already kindled before the first sparks reached the isolated hotel above the Val d'Anniviers. The Blairs felt that they must hurry to America before Doctor Blair's notes, the valuable work of two years, might by chance be exposed to censorship. Terrified Miss Patty was in haste to go back, and convinced that all reports of the German march through Belgium were merely a ruse and that

the hotel at Chandolin would be the first object of concerted Prussian attack. Though Sheila preferred to remain in Switzerland, the others refused to return without her, so she felt that she must submit her wish to theirs. Geddes joined them in Genoa, and they made the uncomfortable voyage home on a crowded ship.

Blair was not a good sailor, and Ann was so occupied with him that Sheila fell to Geddes to look after. She had a sense of rest when with him. He knew when to be silent, and he knew, with the physician's instinct, when she could not bear her own thoughts as they neared the country from which she had been so long an exile. He talked to her of experiences among many sorts of places and peoples, and she gained a knowledge of his philosophy of living, at times singularly in accord with her own. She felt a certain comfort in the fact that she was not to lose him altogether

out of her life, for he told her it had been his custom for years to run down from the big city in which he lived for frequent week-ends with the Blairs.

Ann had urged Sheila to make her home with them.

"We've a great rambling house and no children, and it would be the joy of my heart to have you and Mavis with us, Sheila. Ed is just as anxious for it as I am, and very impatient of your reasons against it. I wish you would be more guided by his judgment, dear."

Sheila adhered to her determination to live near them, but in a home of her own. In the end, it was arranged for her to buy an acre of land from a corner of the Blairs' place and build a bungalow. She and Mavis were to stay with the Blairs while the house was being built.

Soon after reaching America, she had the first communication from Rebecca which she had received since she had left her sister's home:

DEAR SHEILA: I am sending this to your lawyer to forward to you. George has a very high sense of business honor, but he says most women are totally lacking in it, so he has never been surprised that you should think yourself justified in holding on to every bit of the profits made from your land, which was so much more valuable than what I received. While of course I ask nothing from you, it seems only just to let you know that George is being very much embarrassed by this ill-timed war. Unfortunately he had a fuss with the firm from whom he bought dye, and he had just thrown up the contract when war was declared, and now he has to buy dye at a terrible rise in price and yet sell goods to meet the prices of those who had dye stuff on hand. War is a terrible thing; it is so hard on the manufacturing interests. George says this country has nothing to do with a European war, yet our newspapers insist upon giving so much space and publicity to it, even our town papers, in which he has always advertised most generously.

Now that is a plain statement of the case which it is due you to know, as you have a perfectly safe six thousand a year without taxes, while my store rents for only three thousand, and the repairs and taxes are simply unreasonable, and I now have the burden of four children.

I ask nothing. I leave it to your conscience. Affly,

REBECCA C. WILKINSON.

Sheila thought for some days before she answered the letter:

DEAR REBECCA: I am sorry to hear of George's reverses. I have directed my lawyer to pay you half my income (three thousand dollars) for two years, which will give George time to rearrange his affairs. This I do gladly, as a gift for our dear mother's sake.

SHEILA.

"I didn't dare tell you, Ann," Sheila confessed, as she handed her friend Rebecca's curt note of acknowledgment.

Ann scolded her with a practical "Now you'll have to give up that china you wanted and gracious knows how many other things!" Edward Blair was so vexed that he poured forth the story to Geddes, who happened to be there at the time, and he was too annoyed with "Sheila's quixoticism" to notice that Geddes' eyes were bright and tender as he smoked away in silence.

The bungalow was completed by the late spring, and the dainty furnishings consumed all the ready money Sheila had saved during her sojourn in Europe. Her tastes were simple, and even with her income cut in half, she felt that she could live economically and recoup. She began to have an eager desire for the privacy of her own nest. Warm and loving as Ann Blair was, something in the atmosphere of the Blairs' home was beginning to oppress Sheila and to arouse vague fears.

Was it merely her instinct of self-protection—sharpened to an abnormal degree by some disagreeable experiences abroad—or did Edward Blair seek opportunities to be alone with her? He was keen to discuss his book with her, alive to her criticisms, and appreciative of her point of view. In spite of his unfailing deference toward his wife, was there a note in his voice more eager, more interested, when he was alone with Sheila? When he heard his wife's step outside, did a surge of disappointment dull his animation?

It had been only during the past few weeks that Sheila had asked herself these questions. In spite of her genuine affection for them both, Edward had never been so dear to her as Ann. Had her intimacy with them been too candid? There was no phase of life which the three had not discussed; or, rather,

Blair and Sheila had talked in impetuous challenge each of the other's opinion while Ann had sat by, her wholesome face glowing with humorous appreciation of the fine points of the argument.

Sheila had a passion for early rising. She loved the world "before it was too much peopled," and now her garden gave her additional incentive. At first she had thought very little of it when Blair had begun to change the habits of a lifetime and get up early to have the hour before breakfast with her. Yet once when, instead of a walk and a talk in the garden, she had spent the hour with the carpenters, suggesting some changes in the sleeping porch for Mavis, Blair had been sulky all day.

The day before she was to move into her own home chanced to be Blair's birthday. Geddes had come to spend it with him, as Ann always made a fête of the occasion.

This year she had a rival in Mavis, who had been choked with secrecy for a week over the birthday gifts which were her own selection. There was a Humpty-Dumpty, a tin ice wagon, a red pencil, and an elaborate Noah's Ark. When Blair picked up an odd-looking animal and asked her whether it was geological to have included a megatherium in the Ark, Mavis set the matter straight:

"His tail waggles and his head wiggles and he's named Good Doggie!"

The next parcel proved to be a doll, flaxen of hair and round of eye.

"This is a your-birfdy present for Aunt Ann," explained the child.

"Isn't mother to have a my-birthday present, too?" teased Blair.

Mavis had not provided for her mother because of her inarticulate feeling that the birthday was a Blair affair. For a moment her chin quivered, and then her little face lighted up and she caught Geddes by the sleeve and pulled him toward Sheila.

"I'll give muvver my big doctor," she said.

Everybody laughed at Sheila's funny helplessness, and to cover her annoyance at being embarrassed, she said:

"Ann, I'm glad Mavis' memory was better than mine. I was so busy over those oakum pillows for the French wounded yesterday that I forgot to telegraph to the bookstore to hurry my order. What shall I do? I haven't any gift for him."

"Give him a birthday kiss," laughed Ann. "We get too many when we're young and resent it, and too few when we're older and like it. You'd like that better than the books, wouldn't you, Ed?"

"Much better." His voice was gay and casual.

"Then kiss your one and only brother, Sheila."

It seemed childish to hang back and demur, as if she attached a significance to the kiss that the others did not. There was a moment of indecision, in which she saw Geddes' eyes bent on hers, grave and forbidding. That decided her, as it aroused her sense of injustice.

"Happy birthday, Edward!" She lifted her face to his.

The next instant she regretted it with all the strength of her soul, for she felt the stifled passion in the hard, fierce kiss which Blair pressed on her lips.

Ann, catching at a vase which a sudden gust of wind toppled over, cried to Geddes:

"Oh, I was just in time to save it!"

She was unaware of what it was too late to save—her husband's power of self-control. As she rearranged the roses, she did not observe Blair's strained face and trembling hands. But Geddes saw, anger and pity struggling within him for mastery.

After breakfast Sheila slipped away to the bungalow. She was writing a

letter at her desk, with a comfortable sense of the privacy of being "at home," when she saw a shadow fall on the page.

With a premonition of trouble, she looked into Blair's face.

"Sheila," he began abruptly, "you know."

With all the courage that was in her, she determined to meet the issue squarely:

"I fear, Edward."

His voice was blurred with emotion:

"There isn't anything to fear in the love I give you, Sheila. It's a pure love, without demand or passion. I've searched my heart these many months, and if I didn't believe it was a love that could hurt none of us, I should have torn it out by the roots."

"These many months?" she echoed, bewildered. It had been only in the past few weeks that her apprehensions had been aroused.

"I don't know myself when it began. I know that Geddes and I had the only real quarrel of our lives at Chandolin, when he told me that I cared for you unwisely. That was why he left suddenly for Vienna, but afterward we wouldn't let it make any difference in our relations. I swear I didn't know it myself at that time. There isn't a touch of grossness in the love I have for you, Sheila, only an imperative longing to be with you. You vivify me. I'm like a dark room in which the windows have been opened to the sun."

"Ann would keep the rooms in any house of life wholesome and fresh and free," returned Sheila soberly.

"I love her, I need her—don't mistake me, Sheila. But the feeling I have for you is sublimated. The joy I have in your beauty—oh, my dear, your wonderful, delicate, elusive beauty!—is as free from any taint of earthliness as the pleasure I have in a flower or a crystal spring."

Sheila looked him squarely in the eyes.

"What is it you want, Edward? What do you wish from me? Let's stop talking about flowers and springs. Phrases stifle me. I ask you in direct words, and I want direct speech from you: What is it you wish me to do?"

"Only to let me be with you often, to have the early-morning hour which stimulates me for the whole day, to have you open your heart to me more and more. You appeal to me as a child might do, for you have the same candor, the same seriousness, the same lack of humor."

He did not understand the quick, painful color that burned her cheeks, as she recalled how Kenyon had once told her that he had never quite decided whether her lack of humor was "maddening or endearing" and how hurt she had felt.

"Did I vex you, dear?" he asked penitently. "You're leaving our home to-morrow and I'm deadened with the pain of it. But don't let me lose you, Sheila, for I need you so. I don't ask even the touch of your hand. I'll never ask it. But the harmony and sympathy that vibrate from you are the well-spring of my life."

"I think we're still wandering in a maze of words," she said, with a pallid little smile. "I must find my landmarks for myself. Will you go now, Edward? Remember that the one crime I should hate above all others would be to hurt Ann. All the security of my life to-day I owe to her. She's been sister and mother and friend and protector, but the gratitude that fills my heart when I think of her is less than my love and appreciation of her. There's nobody like Ann—so fine and straight and loyal, so truly good."

"She's the most unselfish wife in the world," he answered sadly. "Not for an instant do I lose sight of that. But my love for you has been pent up so

long that it had to declare itself—not as one confesses a dark secret, but as one unfurls a flag.”

“Oh, go, go!” she cried imperiously, her eyes somber with pain. As he went out of the room, she caught sight of her full length in a mirror.

Tall and slenderly fashioned, with the free carriage of the head on the neck and shoulders, there was a royal, unconscious quality to her beauty. A certain disdain of it seized her. What had her beauty ever brought her save disillusionment—sorrow—flight? Was flight ahead of her now? She turned to the window facing the garden she had taken such pleasure in making. Must she set herself adrift again?

Here in her own home she could protect herself from seeing Blair alone. Ann Blair was her one proved friend, and what would Ann think of her instability of purpose if she abandoned her home as soon as it was finished? Where could she go? There was no place in the United States where she had any ties of home and friends save here. The war made it impossible to return to Europe, and her finances were temporarily straitened. To go away meant to face Ann’s surprise and disapprobation, Edward’s resentment because her action would mean that she did not trust him, and poor Miss Patty’s bewildered disappointment because she had been so happy at the thought of being with her nursing in the new home. And—and more—

Sheila Clavering was a woman who grasped her nettles. With eyes that no longer saw the marigolds in the garden, she pictured the desolation of her life when Geddes should be no longer a part of it. Sometimes she had caught a look in his eyes or a tone in his voice that had made her believe that he cared for her, but he had never made any claim beyond that of being a friend upon whom she could rely. Now that she faced separation, she was over-

whelmed by the revelation that she measured her calendar by the week-ends when he came. She understood him, even when they differed, in a way that she had never understood any one except her mother. Would she be forced to give up so potent a factor in her life as this man’s friendship because of Blair’s madness? Blair had sworn not to do anything to distress her. It was only necessary to accept his promise, to stay where she was, and to help him to overcome the passion which he denied.

With a quick, despairing gesture, as if brushing aside all sophistries, she went to her desk and wrote a letter to her lawyer. She directed him to sell a bond and send her the money, as she was going to California for an indefinite stay.

“I’ll put the continent between us. That’s the safest thing to do for Ann. Neither Edward nor I nor even Mavis is to be considered when it’s a question of Ann’s happiness. She shan’t suffer through me.”

Her sentence of banishment pronounced, she flung herself face downward on the couch. The tears stung her eyes as she remembered the pleasure Ann had taken in selecting the chintz for the pillows.

How she would miss that tender companionship! It seemed to her as if her life had moved in a circle, and again she was facing flight, loneliness, strange places, and strange faces.

VII.

“Mrs. Clavering—Sheila—what is troubling you?”

She heard Geddes’ voice and sat up-right, confused and frightened.

He dropped to a seat beside her.

“When Ann told me you were at the bungalow, I came down expecting to find you as busy as a little girl with a new doll house. Tell me who has hurt you.”

She wondered a moment at the form of his question. Donald must never know; Ann must never know. She, who had caused the trouble, no matter how innocently, owed it to them all to eliminate herself from their lives.

"You'll think me a restless woman"—his keen ear caught the artificial note that for the first time since he had known her crept into the clear voice—"but I've decided not to keep house just yet. It'll give me the same sense of stability to have a home of my own, though I shan't open it for the present. I've decided to take Miss Patty and Mavis to San Francisco, and

as we've never been to California, we may stay there all winter. You'll help me to make it all right with Ann? You'll help me to make her understand this—this restlessness? I suppose I've been a rover and a wanderer too long to become domesticated."

"You've made up your mind to go away?"

"Irrevocably. Don't try to change me," she pleaded nervously. "Nothing you or Ann or Edward could say would persuade me to stay."

Geddes' face had grown as white as his own, but his eyes blazed with triumph.

"Thank God!" he said.

He lifted her interlaced hands to his lips and kissed them with a passion of reverence and tenderness.

"Will you go away as my wife, Sheila? I'm so proud of your victory, my dear, brave-hearted love!"

"I don't understand," she said, puzzled. The only thing that seemed real in the world was the comfort of his arms around her, and since that was real, nothing else mattered greatly.

"You told me, the night Kenyon came to Chandolin, that you were no longer sure



"Realize what you are doing, Blair. Come back to yourself," said Geddes in a quiet voice. "Sheila and I are to be married to-day."

of yourself, that you had lost self-confidence. The only way to regain that confidence was for you to meet a supreme test, to see what was right and to follow it at any sacrifice. I saw that Blair was in love with you, and that the time would inevitably come when he could no longer conceal his infatuation from you. That hour was your test, Sheila. If you failed to meet it, you had learned nothing from the old pain, not even to tell the false from the true. When I came in to-day and saw you so brave, so white, so gallant, as you told me that you were going away, I knew that you had fought your fight and won your victory. In these last months when you have grown dearer to me every day, I've had the temptation to snatch you away from it all, and yet I *knew* that when you realized the truth, you would act just as you have done. I haven't doubted you, but I wanted you to regain faith in yourself."

She drew back from his kisses. The words were difficult, but they had to be spoken:

"You don't love me less because of—of Paul Kenyon?"

He waited a moment, trying to find words to express his honest conviction.

"I'm a doctor," he said simply.

"There's nothing so sacred and so beautiful to me as *life*. You gave up home and friends and your place in the world, and went out alone, a friendless, terrified girl, because human life had the same significance to you. The one crime that would utterly kill my love for a woman would be for her to destroy the life of an unborn child. That is the ultimate sin in my creed."

"You have perfect faith in me, Donald?"

"My darling, I've given you my soul to keep."

"I couldn't love you as I do," she said half inarticulately, "if you didn't love Mavis so dearly."

She lifted her face to his kiss.

They heard a strangled sound. As they turned to face the intruder, Edward Blair hurled himself upon his friend. It was so unexpected that Geddes reeled backward from the force of Blair's blow.

"Don't dare touch him!" cried Sheila.

"I'm going to marry him!"

But the surgeon had torn away Blair's hands from that murderous grasp on his throat and was holding them in a grip of steel.

"Realize what you are doing, Blair. Come back to yourself," said Geddes in a quiet voice, making no effort to strike back. "Sheila and I are to be married to-day. We're going to tell Ann now."

He released Blair, who staggered away and stood as if dazed. Sheila tried to speak, but the quick succession of events had proved too much for her and the tears streamed down her cheeks.

Geddes gently led her away.

"It was the best thing that could have happened for Ed, dearest," he comforted her, when they were out in the garden again. "Though that rush at me in the blind impulse to kill the man who has taken the woman he wants, Ed will see the real nature of his feeling for you. He is clean-minded and generous, and when his passion is stripped bare to his own eyes, he will conquer it for the sake of his integrity as well as his loyalty to Ann."

A turn in the path brought them in sight of Ann, snipping off a bunch of snap-dragons. She gave a cry of incredulous rapture when she saw Geddes' arm around Sheila.

"Ann dear, I've come to ask your permission to marry Sheila." Geddes' voice was not quite steady as he looked into those kind, unselfish eyes.

"Oh, Donald, I'm so glad! I've always seen that you and Sheila were made for each other, but I've just had to wait until you two slowpokes found it

out for yourselves. This is once in my life when my intuitions were keener than Ed's. When I told him that you two would suit each other perfectly because Sheila was so ethereal and you so finely substantial, Ed said in his teasing way, "Then I suppose you would think a pair of stout walking boots an admirable mate for a skylark?" What fun it will be to tell him! Let's go find him!"

"You've more important things to do than to hunt up Ed. This is your busy day. You'll have to help Sheila pack up her things and you'll have to cut every flower in the two gardens, for I'm going to marry her to-day before you have a chance to tell her all my crimes and misdemeanors or to get out any skeletons I may have carelessly left in your guest-room closet."

Thrilled with excitement, Ann's practical mind yet turned at once to ways and means.

"Sheila dear, isn't it lucky that lovely white frock came yesterday? I can't bear for a bride to be married in a dress she has ever worn before. Mavis' little turquoise pin will do for 'something borrowed and something blue'—that will delight her. Ed's birthday cake will serve for the wedding

cake. There he is now! Why, dearest, you've one of your terrible headaches, haven't you? Your face is so pale and drawn. But I've glorious news to make you well." She poured out her story with eager delight. "Now you must lie down and cure your head, for you've nothing to do."

The look of raw suffering in Blair's face had made Geddes forgive him everything.

"Don't you believe he has nothing to do! You arrogant woman, why do you usurp everything to your own sex? You may give the bride away, but Ed's my best friend and he's to be our best man." He put a hand on Blair's shoulder. "Now I must go for the license and the minister."

"I'll go with you," said Blair.

"Don't forget the ring," Ann reminded.

"I have that already," Geddes answered, and the look in his eyes as they met Sheila's was enough to satisfy a woman's soul. "My Scotch grandmother gave me her wedding ring many years ago. 'See that your bride is bonny and good and brave,' she told me. 'Bonny is good and brave is better, for life has its ups and downs, lad, and you want a brave heart alongside.'"



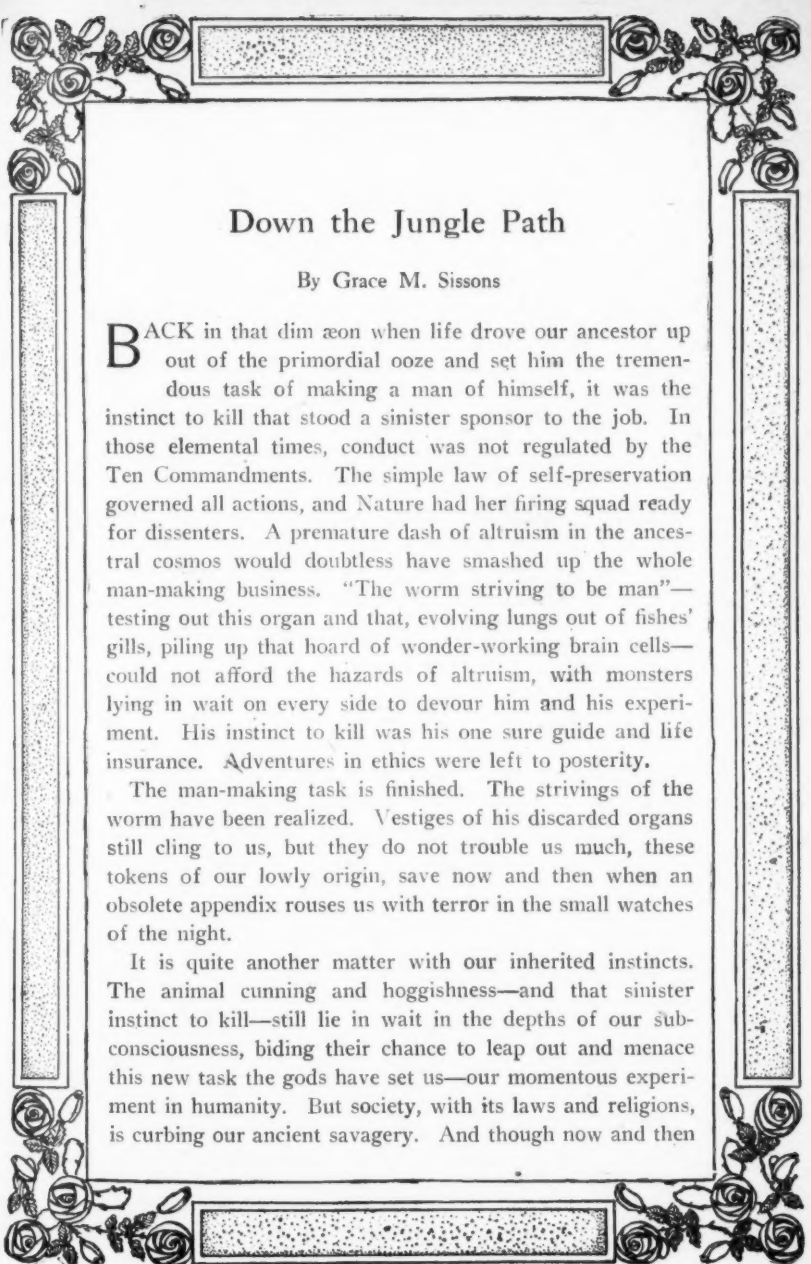
VESPERS

THE birds are sleepy, yet they pray
Unto their god, in humble way,
That he will give them, for their need
To-morrow, store of drink and seed.

They thank him, gravely reverent,
That he, this day, in bounty sent—
For that he is so kind and good—
Much folk to walk within their wood

And glad them by their raiment bright
From leap of sun till lack of light,
And give them heart, the whole day long,
To labor at their task of song.

MARY CAROLYN DAVIES.



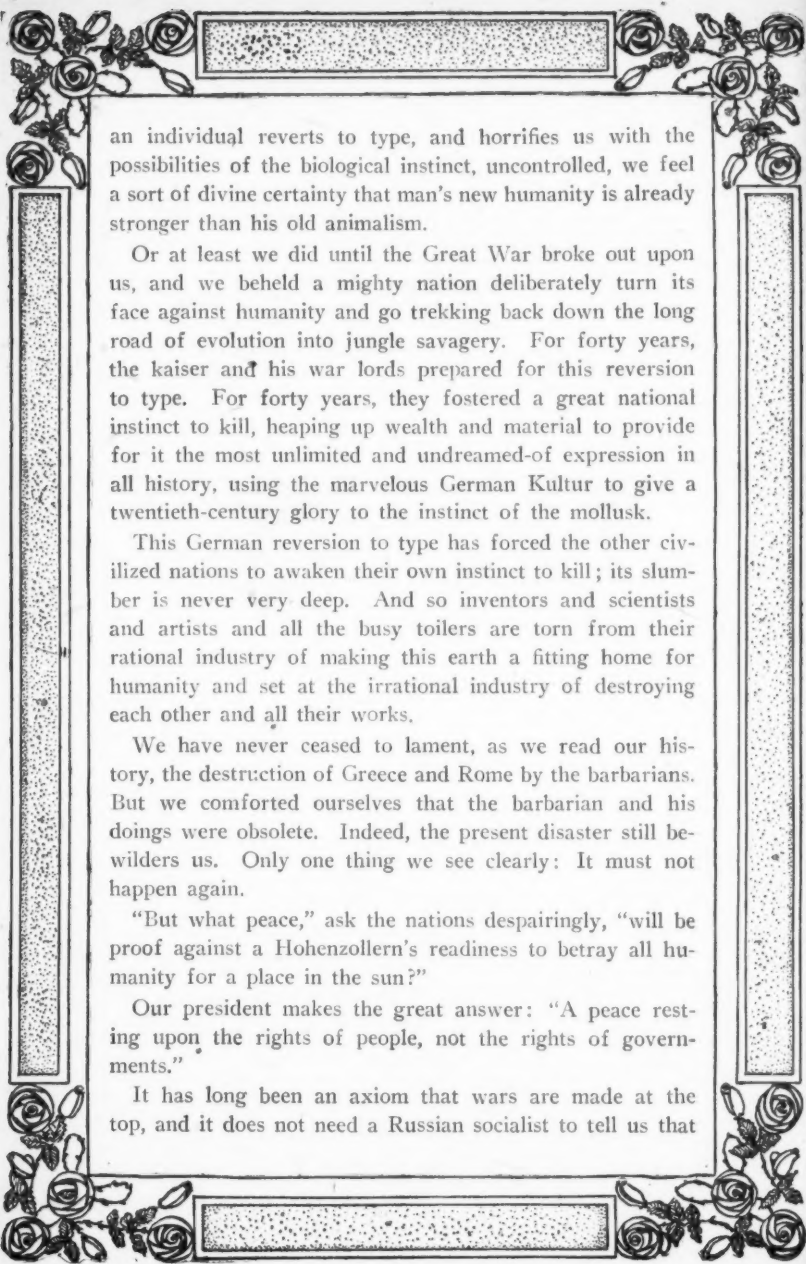
Down the Jungle Path

By Grace M. Sissons

BACK in that dim æon when life drove our ancestor up out of the primordial ooze and set him the tremendous task of making a man of himself, it was the instinct to kill that stood a sinister sponsor to the job. In those elemental times, conduct was not regulated by the Ten Commandments. The simple law of self-preservation governed all actions, and Nature had her firing squad ready for dissenters. A premature dash of altruism in the ancestral cosmos would doubtless have smashed up the whole man-making business. "The worm striving to be man"—testing out this organ and that, evolving lungs out of fishes' gills, piling up that hoard of wonder-working brain cells—could not afford the hazards of altruism, with monsters lying in wait on every side to devour him and his experiment. His instinct to kill was his one sure guide and life insurance. Adventures in ethics were left to posterity.

The man-making task is finished. The strivings of the worm have been realized. Vestiges of his discarded organs still cling to us, but they do not trouble us much, these tokens of our lowly origin, save now and then when an obsolete appendix rouses us with terror in the small watches of the night.

It is quite another matter with our inherited instincts. The animal cunning and hoggishness—and that sinister instinct to kill—still lie in wait in the depths of our sub-consciousness, biding their chance to leap out and menace this new task the gods have set us—our momentous experiment in humanity. But society, with its laws and religions, is curbing our ancient savagery. And though now and then



an individual reverts to type, and horrifies us with the possibilities of the biological instinct, uncontrolled, we feel a sort of divine certainty that man's new humanity is already stronger than his old animalism.

Or at least we did until the Great War broke out upon us, and we beheld a mighty nation deliberately turn its face against humanity and go trekking back down the long road of evolution into jungle savagery. For forty years, the kaiser and his war lords prepared for this reversion to type. For forty years, they fostered a great national instinct to kill, heaping up wealth and material to provide for it the most unlimited and undreamed-of expression in all history, using the marvelous German Kultur to give a twentieth-century glory to the instinct of the mollusk.


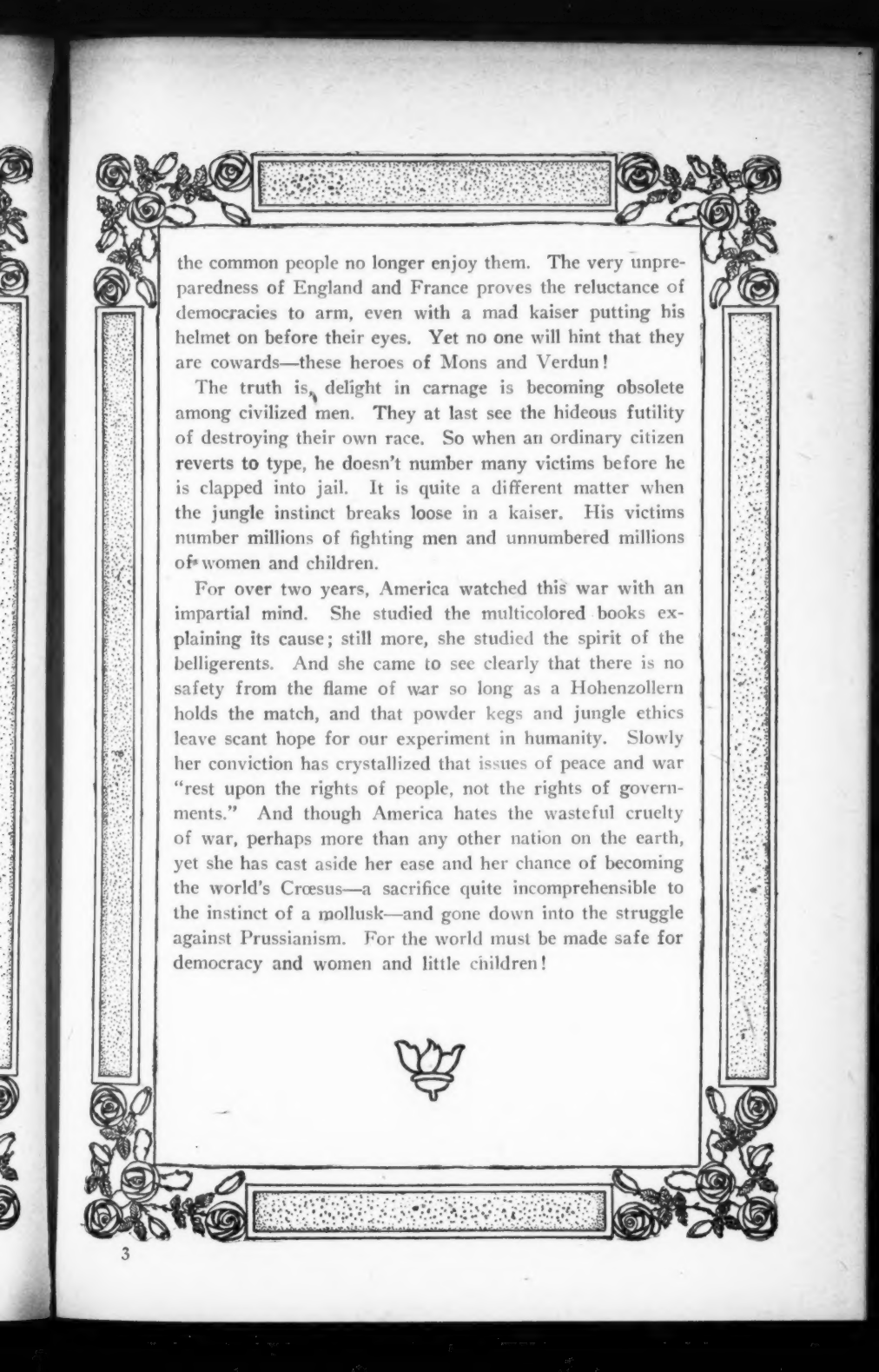
This German reversion to type has forced the other civilized nations to awaken their own instinct to kill; its slumber is never very deep. And so inventors and scientists and artists and all the busy toilers are torn from their rational industry of making this earth a fitting home for humanity and set at the irrational industry of destroying each other and all their works.

We have never ceased to lament, as we read our history, the destruction of Greece and Rome by the barbarians. But we comforted ourselves that the barbarian and his doings were obsolete. Indeed, the present disaster still bewilders us. Only one thing we see clearly: It must not happen again.

"But what peace," ask the nations despairingly, "will be proof against a Hohenzollern's readiness to betray all humanity for a place in the sun?"

Our president makes the great answer: "A peace resting upon the rights of people, not the rights of governments."

It has long been an axiom that wars are made at the top, and it does not need a Russian socialist to tell us that



the common people no longer enjoy them. The very unpreparedness of England and France proves the reluctance of democracies to arm, even with a mad kaiser putting his helmet on before their eyes. Yet no one will hint that they are cowards—these heroes of Mons and Verdun!

The truth is, delight in carnage is becoming obsolete among civilized men. They at last see the hideous futility of destroying their own race. So when an ordinary citizen reverts to type, he doesn't number many victims before he is clapped into jail. It is quite a different matter when the jungle instinct breaks loose in a kaiser. His victims number millions of fighting men and unnumbered millions of women and children.

For over two years, America watched this war with an impartial mind. She studied the multicolored books explaining its cause; still more, she studied the spirit of the belligerents. And she came to see clearly that there is no safety from the flame of war so long as a Hohenzollern holds the match, and that powder kegs and jungle ethics leave scant hope for our experiment in humanity. Slowly her conviction has crystallized that issues of peace and war "rest upon the rights of people, not the rights of governments." And though America hates the wasteful cruelty of war, perhaps more than any other nation on the earth, yet she has cast aside her ease and her chance of becoming the world's Cæsus—a sacrifice quite incomprehensible to the instinct of a mollusk—and gone down into the struggle against Prussianism. For the world must be made safe for democracy and women and little children!





The Prize Story

By Katharine Haviland Taylor

Author of "Cecilia of the Pink Roses," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY GORDON GRANT

It turned out to be her own, but—wonder of wonders—another member of her family was the author of it.

WITH a mixture of adoration and irritation on his face, Ferdinand Wilkinson Jones, maker of automobile bodies, stared at small Audrey Carter.

"Whatever started you on *this*?" he said, with a tight set to his mouth. "It's—it's——"

Words failed him. Mentally he ended, "damnable!"

"Why, Wilky dear," she answered, "I've always felt that I could do *something*, don't you know, something through which I could express myself, and I'm *sure* writing is it."

Tommy Carter, a younger brother, lowered his magazine, which boasted a bathing-suited maiden on its cover and advertised itself as the "Summer Fiction Number."

"I darn' well wish you'd express yourself through ironing some of my ties," he said.

He was ignored.

"And my first name," went on Audrey. "I thought I'd not use Carter, but some name like D'Armond. Audrey d'Armond, author of—— Wouldn't that look nice?"

"No," said the manufacturer of automobile bodies.

Tommy Carter looked at Ferdinand Wilkinson Jones, who was staring sullenly at the pattern on a prayer rug, felt himself too many, and left.

Wilky looked after him with gratitude, turned to a cruelly feminine and attractive young person, and spoke.

"You know mighty well," he said, "that I'm nutty about you—that I'm off my eats and can't sleep and all that kind of stuff—and that you're having a good time with me—now, *aren't* you?"

She widened her eyes, looked at him seriously, and answered:

"Oh, *no*, Ferdinand!"

"Don't 'Ferdinand' me!" he growled. "It's the most *disgusting* thing," he continued viciously, "for a little ninety-eight-pound thing like you to upset a man's whole life!" Then: "I think I have some start, that I'm making a little headway, and then—fireworks and you're all for a 'career' and talk of marriage as hampering and scribble all day long. Who started you on this—this writing jag?"

She moved a pillow, snuggled down a little lower on the broad wicker davenport, and looked off across the lawn.

"It was last March," she said. "You

know the Craig-Wentworths had the author of 'My Inner Self' to read. They said every one was tired of dancing—Margy told me it was cheaper, too, when you counted the caterer and music, if the music *was* anything—so they had him read and talk a little. Wilky, he was *wonderful*!"

Wilky shifted uneasily and grunted.

"He had the *dearest* hair!" she went on. "Long and just curled a little at the ends, and it was brushed away from his forehead with a kind of a wave—What's the matter, Wilky? Aren't you comfortable there?"

"Like to get him alone in a dark alley with a razor!" said Mr. F. W. Jones threateningly.

"Why, Wilky! He was a *dear*! And so sympathetic! He gave your hand the most understanding pressure!"

Wilky got up suddenly and paced to and fro on the broad, shaded porch. Now and again he grunted loudly.

"Don't," said Audrey. "Mamma has callers inside."

Wilky stopped pacing and making noises.

"I've heard about his dear hair," he said with dangerous calm, "and his pressing hands. But—that didn't start you on it, did it? What made it? Just as you said you'd really consider me a permanent fixture in your family, just as I'd got a start, you stopped short and began this darned-fool talk about living for your art! *Darn art!*"

He threw his arms wide. Words were inadequate.

"He read aloud," she said dreamily, "and told us as he read how he felt when he wrote certain spots."

"If he had any sense, he'd have felt sick!"

"Don't interrupt, Wilky. He said that he'd experienced despair, elation, and then forgetfulness, when words came in a golden stream and he felt as if some one else were guiding him, lead-

ing him. And, Wilky, I've felt just that way when I wrote letters, so I began to think. Then he said his start had been hard and that no one had recognized his genius, and you know no one has recognized mine."

"For a girl with a glimmering of sense——" began Wilky, and then he thought it better to stop and light a cigarette.

"I'll never forget that night!" went on Audrey. "They had the rooms dark, except for a standing light near him. You see, his things are broad, and a great many people who cling to middle-class morality blush, so Mrs. Craig-Wentworth thought it better to have semi-dusk. Everybody enjoyed it much better. Two or three men went to sleep, and no one noticed, as they would have if it had been light. Well, all the time I listened, I felt that life had assumed a new meaning and that I had come into my own, and next day I asked daddy for a typewriter."

"Oh, murder!"

"Wilky!"

"Well, I can't help it—dear. This is so *darn* fool! I care such a thundering lot for you—you *are* mine—and then you won't let me see you; you wear those loose blouse things I don't like, and talk high-brow bazuzle; and your mother says you don't eat half the time; and—— Oh, heavens! If I lived in the cave age! Would you take a hike with me now? Well, rather!"

"You don't think I can write?" asked Audrey. Her tone was sweet, too sweet.

"No," answered Mr. Jones shortly. Audrey raised her eyebrows.

"What you think," she said, "is, after all, immaterial. I shall ask you to excuse me now, Wilky, as I want to work."

"Audrey," he said miserably, and reached with an instinctive, need-revealing motion toward her, but she was gone. The door slammed. "Now I've



"Trust a girl to walk over a royal flush and pick out a simp with no chin and a stutter! You make me tired!"

done it!" he muttered. "Now I've done it!"

The following day was the hottest of a hot season. Audrey arose languidly, breakfasted slowly, and greeted her mail, which Tommy brought in, with a faint interest.

She tossed aside a long and closely written epistle.

"I think you're treating him rotten," said her young brother, as he caught the writing on the envelope. "He's a *peach* of a fellow, Audrey. You ask any of the fellows; they're

the ones that can tell you! And a good business man, too. Yesterday, after you left him, I went out and he was 'all in.' Trust a girl to walk over a royal flush and pick out a simp with no chin and a stutter! You make me tired!"

"Tommy," said Audrey, "there's something that is inconceivable to the masculine mind, but something that is true, nevertheless. That is—that many of us have no room in life for matrimony. I respect it. I think it's a fine thing for the masses——"

"Great hat!"

"But for the woman of intellect, for the woman of achievement, there is no room for that hampering restriction, marriage." Audrey picked up a magazine and tore off its yellow wrapper.

"I give up!" said Tommy and stumbled from the room, hand on his head.

This humor Audrey did not notice. Suddenly she forgot the heat. She had turned to the last page of the *Author's Guide* and on it she had found this:

One Thousand Dollars for the Best Christmas Story.

The *Metropole Magazine* offers one thousand dollars for the best short Christmas story. The contest is open to all American writers and closes July 15th at noon. Those wishing—

Audrey arose suddenly. She knocked over a coffee cup, righted it absently, while she still stared at the magic words, and, holding the *Author's Guide*, hurried from the room.

"I have it!" she muttered, as she uncovered her new typewriter. "It ought to be fine—if I can just get the Christmas atmosphere."

She sat down and carefully typed: "Outer Frost and Inner Thaw."

"The snow lay deep on the hillside of—of"—darn, she didn't know what to put!—"of Clarissa Judkin's farm. Here and there, it had drifted high, and again a cruel, cold blast had uncovered the earth and left it bare to December's chill embrace."

Audrey sat back and read her start. It wasn't so bad, she reflected. Suddenly she heard the whir of a lawnmower. The snow faded. She got up quickly and shoved back her chair.

"Elmer!" she called, leaning from the window. "Please don't mow the lawn to-day. I'm writing a Christmas story, and it doesn't fit. It disturbs me!"

"How?" inquired Elmer, who was partially deaf.

"Don't mow—the-lawn!"

"Your paw sez to mow it."

"I—don't—care—what—he—said. Don't—mow—it!"

She went back to her chair. The whir of the machine had stopped, and she heard it being trundled away toward the garage. She started again. A fly buzzed about her ears. She swore softly, as is the habit of modern America, feminine, and hunted a fly swatter. The fly went up to sit on the ceiling and rest.

"Stay there!" she said and then began muttering, "The snow—the snow glittered—silvered—shone in the moonlight. Which? Silvered. The moon, gold in her glory, looked down on the lonely hillside."

"Isn't it too warm for you up here, dear?" asked her mother, coming in.

"No, mother, it isn't," answered Audrey. She moved impatiently.

"Well, it seems so to me, dear," went on the kind and disturbing interruptress. "It's terribly hot. I told Lena just to put on a cold lunch, and then Tom telephoned that he's going to bring Wilky out. It's so hot in town, he said. Dearie, did you put away the wash?"

"Yes, I did." Her answer was clipped and very staccato.

"Excuse me, dear, but were the old luncheon napkins all taken down? They've lost one if they were, for I hunted high and low and there were only twenty-three. My, it is hot!"

She went to the window.

"Elmer!" she called. "Go chip some ice for Lena."

"How?"

"Ice cream!" screamed Mrs. Carter, and Elmer arose from the sweet shade of a locust tree and ambled toward the kitchen.

Mrs. Carter vanished, but the noise of ice cream preparations floated through the heavy air and into the composing room.

"Oh, dear!" said Audrey. "Oh, dear!" and then she went back to the silvered snow.

"Lunch!" called Tommy.

She went down.

"You here again?" she asked of Wilky.

There was an unnecessary emphasis on the "again." He answered haltingly, but she felt no pity.

"Merry Christmas!" said Tommy as she settled.

"How are you going to get atmosphere?" she asked, as she helped herself to tomato-and-cucumber salad. "I don't feel Christmas. A Christmas card seems silly to-day."

"Sit on a cake of ice," said Tommy, "hot-water bottle on one ear, ice bag on the other. One ear always warm at a sleighing party——"

"You're very common!" said the aspiring one.

"String some tinsel balls on the holly-hocks," suggested Wilky.

"Start a roaring grate fire and roast chestnuts," added Tom.

"Oh, don't!" begged Mrs. Carter, who waved a palm-leaf fan to and fro and mopped a constantly moist face. "I really can't stand the idea! My, the heat! Elmer said a day laborer who was working on the bridge fell right off into the water. He saw him."

"Most of 'em wouldn't be hurt by a little water," said Tommy. "Shoot the French dressing, Wilk. Say, sis, going motoring with Wilk and me or are you going to stay in and put Shakespeare on the blink?"

"I shall work, of course," she answered. "I wish some one had a little reverence for my work—my art."

"Why, dearie," said Mrs. Carter, "we all think it's splendid you're doing typing and so on. Papa hopes it will teach you to spell. You know she doesn't spell well, Wilky. The other day she spelled beef steak s-t-a-k-e and plume p-l-o-o-m."

Audrey got up.

"I'm not hungry," she said, "and I wish to be excused."

"That's the way she's been ever since she heard that nut," said Tommy, "and she's a dear, usually. I'd like to soak him!"

"She ought to eat," said Wilky. "She can't stand going without food that way. Can't you take her up something, Tommy?" His eyes were worried. "If this is going to make her happy," he went on, "all right, but it doesn't seem to be doing it—and I wish her ideas of happiness and mine were off the same piece."

"She'll come round," said Tommy. "She'll come round."

If, in the following months, the vast array of rejection slips had not been marred by an acceptance, then in all probability Audrey would not have gone to New York. But the collection was shadowed and made small by a thousand-dollar prize, and Audrey did go a-hunting for life.

One morning, early in February, when she was working at a typewriter which struck f for t and the question mark for an apostrophe, her mother wandered in carrying a basket of darned stockings and singing "Sweet and Low," flattening the "low" with loud bravery.

"What are you doing, dear?" she inquired pleasantly.

"Summer story," muttered Audrey. "Got to be in before April."

"Well, well," said her mother, and then, "There's the doorbell. I wonder who's there? Can you hear, Audrey?"

"No, I can't."

"I wonder whether Lena'll hear it. Sometimes, when she has the door into the dining room shut——"

Mrs. Carter abandoned a rocking chair which squeaked relief and tip-toed toward the head of the front stairs.

"Go swimming?" inquired Audrey's

heroine, who sat in a canoe below an overhanging, heavily scented locust.

"Have to explain that the locust is on the bank," Audrey muttered. "The public are such darn' fools! Some one from Oshkosh sure to write the editor that locusts don't grow a water-lily edition."

"Why, Addie!" she heard her mother call down the front stairs. "How dear of you to run in! No, she's working and mustn't be disturbed. We never disturb her at all. Still snowing? Audrey, Addie's here. When you can come down, do!"

"Oh, damn!" said Audrey and arose.

She was twenty, fiercely feminine, and her writing was to her an emotion outlet rather than a job. It extended to her clothes, which had begun to look like a cross between a fancy-dress ball and cleaning day, and her hair, which always looked as if it had just been washed.

"I'm stifled!" she said dramatically.

Then she wished that she'd thrown out her arms and, thinking it not too late, repeated her statement with the broad-thrown arm movement.

"Delsarte?" inquired Tommy from the doorway. "Better come down. Addie's going to stay for lunch, and Lena's made banana fritters."



"Elmer!" she called. "Please don't mow the lawn to-day. I'm writing a Christmas story, and it doesn't fit. It disturbs me!"

"Food!" said Audrey witheringly.

"Well, I notice you get away with it. Say, Audrey, loan me a dollar?"

"Take it," she muttered, "and leave me—inspiration!"

"Oh, gosh!" said Tommy. "You make me sick!" He looked at her dismally. "Audrey," he said in a miserable tone, "I wish you'd cut those flat-heeled shoes and funny blouses and have your hair marcelled again. You

used to look so *cute*. I didn't blame Wilky a bit for being foolish over you, but what he sees in you now—Honest, the whole darned time, you look disappointed in love!"

"Go!" she ordered. "No one understands!"

Tommy went. He muttered something about spankings, and his face was downcast until he caught an odor from the kitchen, when life took on a new interest and again was rose-hued.

Audrey looked out on a blank brick wall. Then she looked around her room. Her typewriter sneered at her and said:

"You came to New York to work! You were stifled at home. Work!"

But she did not work. She picked up her morning's mail and read bits of it again, Wilky's letter first.

"Your mother read me the last letter you wrote the family," she saw. "She's mighty proud of you, Audrey."

Audrey's eyes filled with tears. She looked toward the typewriter. It seemed to her that if she could sit down, sure of her mother's coming in in the middle of the most important paragraph to ask whether she was too warm or too cold or to retail a bit of absolutely unimportant gossip, she could work again.

She stopped staring at the streaked ceiling and read on:

I am, too, but no one knows how I wish it had been a maker of automobile bodies you'd loved instead of writing! Or—I wish you would think there was room for both of us. I have never felt such a beast, Audrey, as the day before you left, when you told me that you knew almost every bit of my factory's work, and had listened to yards of business talk, and that it had disappointed you that I couldn't listen to a little bit of yours. That hit. It should have. But a man in love is a good deal of a pig and utterly selfish. Audrey dear—

She laid down the letter.

"Oh, dear!" she thought. "Oh,

dear! *What* is the matter with me?" A bit of Tommy's letter came back!

"There's the deuce of a good-looking girl visiting the Lanes—red-headed and full of pep. Wilky had seven dances with her."

The ceiling looked down on lovely eyes full of tears. Seven! Was that the way of men's hearts? Seven! Did that include encores? She'd ask Tommy. No, she would *not*! Seven! It was simply indecent! No girl with any modesty would allow a strange man to dance seven dances with her! Seven! It was disgusting and—

There was a tap at the door.

She called a "Come" and a young person with bobbed hair and heavily penciled brows entered.

"News!" she said with a wave of an envelope. "Vance Goodhope, author of 'My Inner Self,' has asked Bill and me to come to his shack to-night. She can't and you can take her place."

"It seems to me rather strange to do that. I'd like to, of course—but—"

"Oh, heavens! They don't care whom you tote along. They're good sports. Always good eats. His wife is one of those dull, prosaic women who can cook and keep house and all that kind of thing. A great many people say she hampers him—always darning underclothes and so on, and they have a great many children and are generally behind the times. But—you'd enjoy it."

"I'd love to meet Mr. Goodhope," whispered Audrey. "It was he who first inspired me. It was he—"

"All right, then. But his name isn't Goodhope; it's Smith, Henry Smith, in private life. We'll have to start at seven-thirty. It takes an hour to get there. Put on your glads. Everybody dolls." The little sculptress vanished.

"To meet him!" Audrey whispered. She almost felt her literary thrill. Then that faded and she forgot the coming night. "Seven dances!" she muttered. "It's disgusting!"

The author of "My Inner Self!" was fixing the furnace, his wife explained, when Audrey and her cicerone arrived. They heard a shovel, the clatter of a furnace door, then falling coal.

"He'll be up in a minute," said the hamperer. "Do sit down." She removed a woolly sheep from one chair and a headless doll from another. "The children scatter things about so," she murmured.

It seemed very homy. Audrey thought of her mother, her always busy, but generously check-signing father, her teasing small brother, banana fritters—and her throat felt stiff. Then she thought of a successful manufacturer of automobile bodies, and the tear tendency departed in anger. Seven dances! *Seven!* She always had *hated* red-headed girls! *Hated* them!

The author came up. He greeted the newcomers, opened the door to the moment's arrivals, nodded casually at newer ones, and the evening started. Audrey found herself feeling lonely. She migrated toward the hampering Mrs. Smith, who was darning underwear.

"When he writes," explained Mrs. Smith, "he paces about so and wiggles so much that there's hardly a button left on his union suits. I declare, I darn and sew buttons on the whole time!"

The author of "My Inner Self" was reading.

"From her lips came a low refusal," Audrey heard in the thrilling voice of Vance Goodhope. "She turned her head from him and plucked a thin-stemmed lily and held it silently."

"How could she hold it loudly?" inquired Mrs. Smith in a muffled tone.

She had a button in her mouth awaiting placing. Audrey looked at her in a shocked way. She began to believe the stories of hampering.

"This," said Theresa, looking down, 'and'—with a free-muscled movement

—'that!' Her eyes were on the ground at their feet. Both understood. The man quivered and turned away."

Vance Goodhope's voice faded.

"That's rotten, Henry!" said the underwear danner. "Sounds like the hectic stuff born in Washington Square."

Then she methodically folded the undergarments and laid them on top of a sweet-grass basket, which stood beneath the table.

"You know," she said in an aside to Audrey, "he never did work until after he was married. He was so busy being dramatic about his art and feeling different from the rest of folks that he never got down to brass tacks. A few coal bills and babies brought him to. Where are you staying, dear?"

Audrey told her.

"Awful cooking?" inquired Mrs. Smith.

Audrey nodded.

"Garlic," she said, "and garlic and some one's wash hung up in all the restaurants for atmosphere. I'm so tired of it! I guess I wasn't born to it!"

"None of them are. They all come from little towns, all jumping away from 'restrictions.' Most of them ever so glad to see the farm and pie again after they taste a few city restrictions. Please hand me the darning cotton, will you? Under that pink gingham, I think."

"I was *stified!*" came in a low contralto voice.

Audrey looked at a green-clad young person with drooping eyelids. Her whole attitude was a slump. Her arms, which had been flung wide, had dropped limply to her sides. Suddenly she sat up.

"And now," she said, "I *live!*"

Audrey recalled her own use of the same words. She began to feel sick. The whole thing was suddenly ridiculous.

"I don't know why they come in such

hordes," said Mrs. Smith, who had also looked at the green-clad girl. "People are pretty generally the same all the world over, and they just get with other people from the country and stifle in other ways. Stifle in the dramatic—and Italian and French cooking—and rejection slips. Henry, was that one of the babies crying?"

They reached home at one-something.

"Sorry you got marooned with Mrs. Smith," said the bob-haired cicerone. "A crime that he married her! Every one says so. A woman like that couldn't understand the fine sensibilities of a man like Goodhope. Simply a crime! Night," and she disappeared.

Audrey opened the special-delivery letter which had been waiting for her on the table at the bottom of the stairs. It was from Tommy, she saw. She wondered why he'd put a special-delivery stamp on it, as she read it, and then, in quick anger, wonder ceased. It ended:

Peggy Armor, that red-headed girl who's visiting the Lanes, and Wilky motored to Bridgetown and got caught in the first snow-storm. They got in at about two something last night. We're teasing them a lot. She doesn't seem to mind, nor, to think of it, does Wilky. Hope work is going well. We had banana fritters to-day. If Lena doesn't make those in heaven, I won't go. Ever your

TOMMY.

Banana fritters. She *wished* she had one! Suddenly she began to cry.

"I *wish* I had a banana fritter!" she sobbed.

She tried to think she was crying for that. Red hair! She *hated* red-haired girls! *Hated* them!

Her story, heavily titled and accredited in a gay Christmas issue, failed to thrill her as she had thought it would. She thought it rather silly as she looked at it. She tossed it on the bed and took a packet of letters—Tom-

my's—and went through them. She was rereading them because she was lonesome, she argued. These were the paragraphs she read:

That red-headed girl who's visiting the Lanes has lassoed every male in town. She's a peach. Wilky sent her violets last Saturday, and Bob Collins sent her roses. She got their devoted offerings mixed, and thanked each fellow for the wrong thing, but nobody cared. She's that kind, you know. Can carry off anything. Wilk says you've owed him a letter for ages.

Motored down to Long Level last Friday to skate, Peggy Armor—the girl who's visiting the Lanes—Jane Hotchis, Wilky, and I. Wish you'd been along, for we had a peach of a time! We built a fire in the bungalow and ate lunch there. Coffee in a thermos and great sandwiches and so on. That redhead made every one hold her hands to get 'em warm. No one seemed to mind the job.

"I wish I was *dead*!" said Miss Audrey Carter.

She threw the letter on the floor and attacked the next one. Once in a while, she mopped her eyes. She was crying, she informed the maroon-colored walls, because she was homesick.

Wilky says you owe him a letter, and honestly, Audrey, if I were you, I'd write, for although he and this Armor girl seem to be hitting it off wonderfully and he is head-and-heels gone, I don't think she's the wife for him. You used to be fond of him, I remember, Audrey. I think you ought to do what you can to prevent this calamity.

Miss Audrey Carter sobbed aloud.

"Oh, Wilky!" she whimpered. "Oh, Wilky!"

Two days later, she walked down the platform of the little home station. Her suitcase was heavy, for she had saved all her rejection slips. She felt their physical and mental weight.

"It wasn't in me," she thought, "but I don't care. Nothing matters!"

She didn't know quite why nothing mattered, but nothing did.

She turned the corner and came upon Tommy. He stood absolutely still,



"How's business?" she inquired after the silence had grown too long.

gasped, and then enveloped her in a bear hug.

"You look great!" he informed her with his gruff masculine shame of emotion and quick return to the usual. "You've had your hair marcelled!"

"Permanent wave," she said. She blew her nose. It was very good to see even one of the hampering ones! "Wilky?" she murmured.

"He's just scraped pneumonia," said Tommy. He looked very grave. "That Armor girl left town suddenly," Tommy continued, "and he was pretty miserable after it. I thought she'd turned him down. Poor chap! He deserved to be happy, too. I don't know a better fellow."

Audrey laid a hand on her brother's sleeve.

"Tommy," she whispered, "I want to go to see him before we drive out home. Could I? Just because—he's been sick. He couldn't come out to see us soon, could he?"

"No, he couldn't. He's been terribly sick, Audrey. You know how sick those big, strong chaps can get. It jolts you."

"Yes," she admitted, her voice none too steady, "it does."

The car started, swerved over the heavily crusted snow, and went toward the street where Wilky had an apartment. Audrey's knees shook a good deal as she got out of the car.

"You stay in the hall, Tommy," she ordered. "Too many people might excite him."

Tommy nodded, and she made a weak-voiced inquiry into a speaking tube.

"Yes, of course. I know he must be in. I—I don't know why I said that, but can he see me? Me? Oh, Audrey Carter. Yes?"

She turned to her brother, drew a long breath, and then went up some stairs which seemed incredibly long and very steep.

Wilky was sitting before a grate fire. He wore a house coat which was two sizes too small for him, some warping slippers, and his hair needed cutting; but Audrey realized that he was a wonderfully handsome man.

"Wilky!" she said unsteadily and held out both her hands.

He took them, tried to speak, failed, and then sat down suddenly and held his too thin hand over his eyes.

"My heavens — how — I've—missed you!" he whispered.

She thought of the red-haired girl and her cheeks grew warm. Her capacity for anger and her desire for cruel revenge were constantly alarming her. She settled, put her feet up on the fender, and looked at the emotion-racked Wilky.

"How's business?" she inquired after the silence had grown too long.

"All right. Doing a lot of ambulance bodies and some other war stuff. How's your work?"

"I'm never going to work again."

"What?"

"I haven't failed," she answered. "Understand, Wilky, I *could* succeed. Why, only in November, I sold a story to some journal in Ohio, and they paid me sixteen dollars for it, which proves I could support myself, but I have no heart for the work. I—I simply want to stay at home and talk to mother and dad and Tommy——"

"Do I come in?" Wilky leaned forward.

After a moment he started, for Audrey had hidden her face, and her shoulders were shaking. He slipped to his knees by her and did that universal masculine trick, the exposing of a tear-wet face to day's cruel light. He held her hands tightly.

"Dearest!" he whispered. "Dearest! Oh, dearest!"

"When I heard," she gulped, "when I thought of any one else holding—holding your hand, I wanted to kill her! I—— Oh, Wilky!"

She put out her arms and closed them about his neck, and he closed his eyes.

"Wilky," she whispered, "I have no pride. N—nothing matters. Will you try to love me again?"

"Love you!" he answered, and he laughed unsteadily.

"You do?" she asked, and then he kissed her.

Some time later, Tommy pounded on the door. There was a commotion, the settling of a tie and the straightening of a hat, and he was invited to come in.

He shook hands with the flushed Wilky and kissed his small sister.

"All explained up?" he inquired.

Then Audrey remembered; her eyes flashed; she drew a sharp breath and turned upon Wilky.

"I must ask," she said, "and be answered truly. *Did you love that girl that visited the Lanes?*"

Tommy went over to stand looking out of the window. Once he laughed a little and said something that sounded like "prize story."

"Did you?" she asked again, her eyes on Wilky. "Nothing matters, but I must know. I never liked the Lanes. Never! Wilky—*did* you love her?"

"Why, dear," he answered, "I don't know what you're talking about! Really I don't! The Lanes have been South all winter!"

In the Reign of Pompadour

By May Emery Hall

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARE ANGELL

French history comes to the rescue.

MRS. PERCIVAL ARMITAGE, correctly gowned in black taffeta of the most unyielding stiffness and an equally crisp manner of martyr-like rectitude, turned the corner of Haviland Boulevard into the more plebeian Scott Street. She was about to make a first call at the vivid, glaringly new, dumpy bungalow that encroached with such vulgar familiarity upon her own grounds. The house was suggestive of nothing so much as strawberry ice cream—deeply pink strawberry ice cream—that had been arrested midway in the melting stage and rapidly utilized, but not so rapidly as to conceal its streaky dissolution. The trim was more pinkily emphatic, bespeaking the solidly frozen cream before it had had a chance to run off into sticky rivulets. Mrs. Armitage's knowledge of the bungalow dwellers—the Hoops—was fragmentary. Nobody seemed to know anything about them except that they were newcomers, and that Mr. Hoops was the proprietor of a jewelry store in town.

Mrs. Armitage was met at the door by a rather frowzy blond woman of ample proportions. A good-natured smile of friendly welcome lighted up her placid face at sight of her afternoon caller. Though it was nearly four o'clock, refractory locks of straw-colored hair gave telltale evidence of neglect since early morning. Down the front of her checkered-gingham house dress, two or three congealed amber drops of molasses alternated with yellowed pearl buttons. Held loosely in

her unmanicured hands was a fat book with gilt edges, the reading of which had apparently been interrupted by the ringing of the bell.

"So good of you to drop in," was her informal greeting, in a tone that carried a trace of wistfulness. Then, laughing gently, "Do you know, if somebody hadn't uv done so, I don't believe I'd uv remembered to stop and get Jerry's supper."

"Your book must be intensely interesting."

From the depths of a plump-cushioned, tidied chair into which her hostess had literally thrust her, Mrs. Armitage made the frigidly polite observation.

"I should say yes! I just dote on French history."

"French history?" Mrs. Armitage's gasp was involuntary.

"Why not?" challenged the other in slow bewilderment. "Don't you?"

"That—well—depends——"

"Oh, but the Louis', with Montespan, La Vallière, Dubarry, Pompadour——" To Mrs. Armitage's sensitively attuned ear, the enunciation of the names of the distinguished company sounded very much like the giving of a grocery order in bad French. "Why, Mrs. Armitage, them courts they lived at is as real as real to me! I could take you over Versailles just as easy as I could take you round Carltonville. Carltonville," the speaker interpolated, "is the place up in New Hampshire I come from."

Mrs. Armitage showed no desire to

lend herself to a personally conducted Hoops tour through the decayed grandeurs of the Bourbon playgrounds. Nevertheless, Mrs. Hoops' eager voice went on.

"And Josephine, too—I love Josephine! But, after all, I think my favorite is Madame de Pompadour."

Her horrified listener drew her skirts around her figuratively and literally.

"Pompadour was a sinner!" The words flashed out with cutting indictment. "A sinner of the blackest dye! How can you, then—how can you"—Mrs. Armitage fairly choked with suppressed indignation—"uphold that French hussy?"

Mrs. Hoops winced. A pained look crept into her florid face.

"But do we"—she hesitated with timid deprecation—"do we really know she was a hussy?"

"Of course we do! History——"

"I know. History says a whole lot of things, Mrs. Armitage. But have you ever noticed, it's mighty careful never to hint at what went *before*? You see we don't know what *made* Madame de Pompadour do the things she did. Poor dear! Poor dear! I never felt, somehow, she had a square deal.

"Sometimes it takes more courage to be wicked than to stay good," was Mrs. Hoops' next contention. "Leastways, that's what I used to think after pa and ma died and I had my little brood of five to bring up. Dear kiddies, every one of them! But that ain't sayin' that some days I didn't want to fly the coop and leave behind all the bakin' and sweepin' and house-cleaning' and machine-runnin'. Perhaps a steady grind like that was what changed De Pompadour's life. Who knows? Likely's not, she didn't have no Jerry waitin' to marry her and no kiddies to kiss her good night. Anyhow, one thing I know—she never had nobody to mother her."

It was fortunate that Mrs Hoops did not catch the fleeting expression of deep disgust on her caller's face. Pompadour and "mothering" indeed!

"And it wasn't all sinnin'," pleaded Mrs. Hoops. "The court life of them grand ladies was more'n anythin' else like the checker games we and the kiddies used to play round the sittin'-room table evenin's. The one who could see the most moves ahead won. I never did. My head was always too tired. But Madame de Pompadour—it took her to see the moves ahead!"

"I dare say."

Mrs. Armitage's mouth closed tight in thin-lipped aggressiveness. Her aristocratic nostrils quivered. It was momentarily getting more impossible to keep up even a pretense of neighborly amity. It was sufficiently humiliating that this coarse, dowdy woman and her commonplace husband should depreciate the prestige of the neighborhood by planting a dumpy strawberry bungalow in its midst; it was even worse that she should transplant from the backwoods of New England every known variety of grammatical atrocity and local idiom, along with a careless sloppiness of dress and a deplorable freedom of manner; but that she should presume, even in conversation, to overstep the boundaries that separated accepted standards of conduct from Pompadourian looseness of morals was unthinkable! To hold a brief for those moral outcasts of France! The woman was a menace, a festering sore on the fair life of the community! Before contamination should spread, an operation, clean-cut, decisive, was imperative.

"Yes, it was the French history," trailed on the sing-song monotone, relieved only by a sharp tang of the speaker's native New Hampshire, "that made my world over. I got a peek into it out'er one of Chris' books, the term I sent him to high school. After that,



"So good of you to drop in," was her informal greeting, in a tone that carried a trace of wistfulness.

it was like havin' a front seat at a play. I looked on, out of breath, watchin' to see what the kings and cardinals and princesses and maids o' honor would do next. At last there was somethin' new to look forward to."

Mrs. Armitage rose stiffly.

"But those young people—your brothers and sisters," was her insinuating parting thrust, "did they grow up quite—quite as you wished? That is—didn't the influence of your French reading— In a way—you must acknowledge—in places it is decidedly pernicious—"

"You mean were they good?" Mrs. Hoops brought the flounderings to an

abrupt ending by the directness of her question.

"Well, yes."

"Of course they grew up good! I seen to that! Not until they was all safe and settled would I say 'yes' to Jerry. It was like this"—the washed-out blue eyes grew tender with a far-away look—"I made them tell me things; before I got through with them, *everything*, though the kiddies, dear geese, never guessed it. You see—I hadn't got acquainted with such clever people as Dubarry and Pompadour for nothin'. But there"—she pulled herself up with an apologetic gesture—"what am I tellin' you this for—you

with a daughter? And such a daughter!"

The light died out of the faded eyes. Little lines and shadows crept from their hiding places and penciled, for the moment, a woman many, many years older—Mrs. Hoops' self when middle age should be flown. She was thinking of a chest of drawers filled with dainty, pink, ruffled things with a quite extravagant width of lace. For many long years, they had lain undisturbed, awaiting the delayed coming of royalty—a royalty that would eclipse in brilliancy all the Louis' put together. A tear dropped, unheeded, on the fat, gilt-edged book she held in her lap.

"But of course Agnes tells you things, too?"

"No!"

"No?" The voice was vaguely troubled.

"There *are* no things for a right-minded girl to tell her mother—provided that mother is a good mother and has brought up her daughter properly."

"Oh!"

A second time Mrs. Armitage made a movement toward the door.

"Do wait," urged Mrs. Hoops, "long enough to look at my Pompadour room. It'll only take a minute," and before her caller had a chance to frame an excuse, she had led Mrs. Armitage through a long, narrow hall to a door at the extreme end and thrown it open.

A sickeningly sweet odor, lingeringly funereal in its heaviness, caused the visitor on the threshold to draw back sharply. Tightly drawn shades and a deeply violet atmosphere were likewise drearily suggestive of death. Wall paper, carpet, plush upholstery, all partook of the same ghastly hue. What was not violet was gilt. Spindly furniture mixed itself up in promiscuous confusion. A sofa in the corner resembled an insecure bier. The outlines of the new white gown, spread at full length upon it, heightened the spectral

illusion. It would not greatly have surprised Mrs. Armitage had a sepulchral voice begun intoning the burial service.

With positive relief, she watched her hostess cross to the windows, pull up the shades, and let in the light of day. A moment more and she would have screamed aloud. But it was no death chamber of dead and gone Hoops into which she gazed. At the same time, it was a veritable ghost land—a ghost land of the eighteenth century. Mrs. Hoops faced about with a flush of childlike pleasure on her mild face.

"How do you like it?" she asked proudly.

Mrs. Armitage muttered a polite lie.

"The perfumery is violets—Josephine's favorite scent. You remember when Napoleon went back to St. Cloud, years after they'd lived there together, he still smelled 'em. They hung on, like his love. The real good violet sachet comes high—two dollars an ounce—but I thought it was worth it.

"Violet and gold—that's my color scheme. Nothing else would do for royalty, would it? The furniture is genuine antique—French antique—every bit. The dealers in New York all know me, and whenever they get a find, they drop me a postal. I always go in next day by the earliest train. Them on Fourth Avenue is the best hustlers. It does beat everything how they manage to get hold of so much. In the homes of big families, I suppose, who's lost their money."

Thus she meandered on, totally unconscious that "Made in the U. S." screeched from every fraudulent leg, round, and table top or that, almost within earshot, across the Jersey meadows, could be heard the whir of the machinery that turned out just such trash by the vanload. From one shaky gilded chair to another passed Mrs. Hoops, smoothing the purplish cushions with affectionate touch, finally stopping before a framed oval portrait that hung

in the center of the space between the two windows.

A brazen, carmine-lipped woman, with puffs upon puffs of tawny hair piled high on her haughty head, frowned insolently down upon the two women. An over-plump neck was encircled by what purported to be several strings of pearls, but the general effect was that of a very new and very tightly woven clothesline in the act of strangling its victim.

"Madame de Pompadour," introduced Mrs. Hoops in a whisper. "Isn't she too lovely for anything?"

Mrs. Armitage murmured a second well-bred fib.

"A man come round and I got him to paint it from a magazine picture I'd cut out. He done pretty well, considering." Mrs. Hoops stepped back a pace and viewed her divinity with squint-eyed appraisal. "Though I think," she amended, "it would uv been better if he'd touched up the lips a little more and put on another string o' pearls. The frame was a bargain. They took two dollars off 'cause it was nicked where you'd never notice. Gold flower-de-lisses ain't to be found every day. The lilies of France, you know."

Her eyes dropped to a diminutive writing desk directly beneath the portrait.

"An escri-tory," was the proud announcement. "It cost Jerry a good bit, too. The dealer give me his word that Pompadour used to set at it and write her notes to the king. Who'd ever think——"

"I really must be going." This time there was outraged finality in every syllable. "Agnes will be home and——"

"Oh, speaking of Agnes," inserted Mrs. Hoops wistfully, "I wish I knew her. She seems such a sweet, lovely girl. Won't you let me borrow her some day. I'm so fond of young people, and there are times when I miss the kiddies so much——"

"Agnes," evaded Mrs. Armitage icily, "is very busy just now, preparing for graduation."

Agnes was never "borrowed." Neither did Mrs. Armitage repeat her call. A few of the braver spirits among her acquaintances made deprecating overtures at the strawberry bungalow, but in time their pasteboard receipts of unpleasant duties accomplished yellowed and became fly-specked on the Hoops' marble-topped hall stand, and none came to take their places. Nobody quite knew how it came about, but before long the term "impossible," most commonly applied to Mrs. Hoops, had definitely given way to an adjective of more sinister significance. It had the same first syllable.

If the suburban arbiters of community morals, headed by Mrs. Armitage, thought that Mrs. Hoops keenly felt her social ostracism, they were greatly mistaken. There was no room in the capacious recesses of her simple heart for resentment. At first she did vaguely wonder. Then she ceased thinking about the matter altogether. As for being lonesome, who could be in the midst of the loves and hates, the passions and intrigues, the splendors and grandeur of Pompadour's reign. And Madame de Pompadour and her kind never shut the door in one's face, never asked for a certificate of character. After all, the eighteenth century was, in many respects, far more satisfactory than the twentieth.

It was wistaria time. The purple blooms had drunk their fill of the morning sun, leaving little or no surplus for the interior of the latticed arbor over which they hung in intoxicated heaviness. On leaving the Armitages' rear door, ruddy grocery clerks and perspiring ice-men lingered gratefully in the shady retreat. Following them, in the early afternoon, came Norah, the cook, Rosa, maid-of-all-work, and Hugh, the chauffeur, who did not lin-



The girl's voice had a hint of terror in it. "Varley! Varley Colchester! Let me go! Let me——"

ger. It was the "help's" Thursday afternoon off.

The wistaria arbor should have been deserted. But it was not deserted. From its trellised privacy came the sound of voices—a girl's, shy, hesitating, alternating with sudden bursts of high-pitched, nervous laughter, and deep-toned male responses. Mrs. Hoops, slouched in a wicker chair on her side porch, smiled with absent-minded indulgence. Through the cross-barred interstices of the arbor, she could catch intermittent glimpses of Agnes Armitage—white-froked, dainty, flushed—but an Agnes Armi-

tage who seemed to have emerged, overnight, from the chrysalis of the girl stage into the potential glories of womanhood. Already she had made one or two changes in her personal appearance, preparatory to trying her wings. Her two long braids of the day before had been metamorphosed into a fluffy crown that invested her shapely little head with becoming dignity, and, to the same degree that it added to her stature, a noticeable lengthening of gown accomplished the same purpose in the opposite direction. The dreamy eyes held a starry wonder.

There was nothing striking about her companion. He was merely a thickish, dark-browed specimen of the conventional, well-to-do idler, at least ten years her senior. Passable good looks were his, despite the blemish of heavy, loose lips. Fragments of conversation were wafted to the Hoops' side porch.

"What's on, did you say?" came the lazy drawl.

"A mothers' meeting. Mother has a paper to read. After that, a loan exhibition of paintings at the club house."

"Paid admission, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes. The Foreign Missions Fund gets the proceeds," said the girl.

"Bless the heathen, then! May their

tribe increase!" came fervently from the other.

There was a pause.

"I wish—that is—I'd rather——" stumbled the girl. "But you don't mean to be sacrilegious, do you?"

"Sacrilegious? Why, my dearest child!"

"But just for a moment——"

"Tut, tut, you adorable angel! Let me prove to you I am not wholly pagan. I broke an important engagement—a business engagement—this afternoon for the express purpose of worshipping at the shrine of a saint. Do you want to know her name?"

His voice deepened as he moved closer to the girl. With bold freedom, his smooth, sleek hand played with the frill of her short sleeve. She turned away her eyes.

"Saint Agnes—that's her name. Talk of dauby pictures! Give me the real, living, warm, flesh-and-blood tint, a golden aureole framed in wistaria blossoms, eyes that haunt and haunt one——"

"And you—you"—the girl's voice was muffled with emotion—"you feel like—like that?"

The reply, to a mature ear at least, might have seemed lacking in convincingness.

"Somehow it makes me think of those legends of the Knights of the Round Table we read last year in school. They were too beautiful!" The speaker caught her breath in little palpitating jerks. "And to think—to think—I used to let those high-school boys walk home with me! Boys! I wonder they didn't bore me to death! Silly, stupid things! Do you suppose they'll ever grow up? Why, I feel ages and ages and ages older than they!"

"Quite an octogenarian, in fact," teased the man. "But have you thought about what I asked you, little saint?"

"Oh, the ride to the lake by moon-

light?" A troubled frown of perplexity swept over the girl's face. "It would be too romantic and splendid," she pondered, "but—but—well, it hardly seems right to deceive mother so. Do you think so? What would she say if she ever found out I'd been meeting you without her knowing?"

The thick-lipped one pretended injury.

"Oh, if you don't want to——"

"Please, oh, please!"

"Not for the world would I think of urging you." He relapsed into pained silence.

"Would I be very, very late getting back? And if I asked Norah to leave the key under the mat, would it be very, very——"

"Not in the least 'very, very,'" supplemented the man, with restored good humor. "Isn't all fair in love?" The girl reddened as he lingered on the last word. "Agnes, darling, you're just the girl to appreciate the beauty of it all—the soft darkness, the drowsy night songs of the insects, the lulling swish of the water lapping the shore, a quivering bar of silver stretching across the lake straight to you and me. You and me, little saint! We two alone with the loveliness of it all, shut off from the rest of the world! Can't you see it! Can't you feel it?"

"It almost hurts!" came the tense whisper. "Such a wonderful adventure can't be—just *can't be*—she searched her companion's face pleadingly for confirmation—"really wrong, can it?"

For answer, he swept her into his arms. There was the sound of half-hearted resistance, tremulous remonstrances, passionate kisses. Then the girl's voice came faint, as from far away, with a hint of terror in it!

"Varley! Varley Colchester! Let me go! Let me——"

She struggled to her feet, panting, then turned, with an expression at once

relieved and penitent, toward her companion.

"Just—just—for a moment—you—you almost scared me!" she breathed.

"Dear little Saint Agnes!" The words held more of half-concealed contempt than of affection.

Varley Colchester! Where had Mrs. Hoops heard the name? It was altogether too unusual to be lightly forgotten. She searched dusty, neglected corners of her memory for some clue. Something unpleasant was connected with it—of that she felt sure—but just what she could not remember. Varley Colchester. Varley Colchester. She said the syllables over and over as if their mere repetition would ensure a solution.

It came to her at last, after much patient, hard thought. The unpleasant association visualized itself. To confirm the correctness of her conjecture, she rose and went into the house and up the stairs with unwonted agility. Out of breath, she entered the tiny room at the head of the stairs, in which several slanting jogs and a man's flat-topped desk fought for supremacy. It was Jerry's "office." Here he made out bills, affixed a rounded signature to those same bills when they came back with remittances, and indulgently signed checks for Pompadour and Dubarry frauds. Mrs. Hoops made straight for the second drawer left. What she sought lay on top of a neat pile of papers her husband had worked over until a late hour the evening before. In the regular, unhurried handwriting of Jeremiah the methodical appeared the damning name, "Varley Colchester."

She swooped upon the slip of paper with a clawing motion, as of an angry bird of prey. It crumpled under her savage touch and, as she pulled it from its hiding place, a splintered edge of the drawer tore off a triangular corner. Mrs. Hoops read and reread the name,

as well as what followed. Then she calmly put the paper back into the drawer and closed it.

"Mind your own business, Marian Hoops," she reminded herself.

With the words of advice still upon her lips, she opened the drawer again. She took out the paper, examined it once more, and again restored it to its place.

"Remember, Marian Hoops, what usually happens to meddlers. The mother wouldn't thank you and surely the girl wouldn't."

For the third time, she opened the drawer. Her hand smoothed the wrinkled scrap of evidence with lingering hesitation. The paper resolved itself into a sweet face in the first flush of womanhood, a face that had matured overnight. Near it, dangerously near it, were two heavy, sensual lips.

"You can't get away from it, Marian Hoops! You know you can't! What's the use of your dilly-dallying?"

She extracted her husband's coarsest pen, plumbed the black depth of the massive ink well, and then scrawled a down-hill addendum that would have made the punctilious soul of Jeremiah the methodical cringe with acute distress. A spluttering blot served as a period. Briskly waving the piece of paper back and forth to dry it, Mrs. Hoops descended the stairs and sped through the hall to the door of the Pompadour room. She did not pause on the threshold, as was her wont, to admire the treasures within. Instead, she hurried to the *escritoire*, opened it, and then, having placed the paper in its ornate guardianship, closed the desk with a vicious bang. The *escritoire* tottered with the unwonted treatment, as if sentient of the owner's mood. Mrs. Hoops went back to the wicker porch chair to wait.

Some time later, the thick-set figure for which she watched strolled from the wistaria arbor toward the sidewalk.



She held the accusing bit of paper at arm's length as if she feared deadly infection.

At the point where the Japanese barberry hedge disputed the right of way, lingering good-bys were said. Agnes' voice had lost all trace of her momentary fright. It was plainly evident that Varley Colchester had been restored to his knight-errant guise.

"To-night, then, little saint?"

"To-night, Varley—dear. Only are you quite sure——"

"Until to-night, then."

The girl turned slowly toward the house.

"My dear!" Mrs. Hoops' heart thumped with a sense of the temerity of the thing she was about to do. "Miss Agnes!"

"Yes, Mrs. Hoops." Agnes Armistage jumped. Then she turned a consciously pink face in the direction of her neighbor's porch.

"Do you mind coming here a moment?"

The girl obeyed laggingly.

"I want to ask a favor of you."

"Yes, Mrs. Hoops." The girl's delicately penciled brows arched in wonder as she tried to meet Mrs. Hoops' gaze fearlessly.

"It's like this. I'm thinking of getting a piece of statuary for the parlor, a Venus or something. I don't know just what to pick out from the catalogue I got. Now I heard you took an art course the last year in school—and I thought—maybe——"

The girl's sigh of relief was heavily audible in its intensity.

"You want me to help you? Is that it?" She brightened. "Why, I'd love to!"

"Now I come to think of it," said Mrs. Hoops, as Agnes mounted the porch steps, "I believe I mislaid that catalogue some place upstairs. It may take me some minutes to hunt for it. Do you want to be lookin' at my Pompadour room while you wait?"

"Oh, so much!" The eagerness was flatteringly sincere.

Mrs. Hoops led the way. The insecure, bierlike sofa, the strangulated portrait of the court favorite, the fragile gilded chairs—all these she lightly touched upon, but before the *escritoire* she paused with deliberate purpose.

"What stories it could tell, Miss Agnes," she said with affected lightness, "if it could only talk! Think of the love letters it has guarded tight! Royal love letters!"

The girl blushed a deep, warm red.

"Oh, how perfectly thrilling! You don't suppose, Mrs. Hoops, that one or two got tucked away by mistake and overlooked?" She seated herself playfully before the desk. "Do you mind my hunting for them?" she asked.

To Mrs. Hoops, it seemed that her soul was getting smaller and meaner by the minute, actually shriveling up, black with guilt, so readily had her unsuspecting victim walked into the trap set for her.

"Hunt all you like, Miss Agnes," she replied with averted gaze. "Because it may take some time——"

Outside the door, from the deepest depths of her pained heart, she muttered a brief, tense prayer:

"Oh, God, help that baby in there!"

Then she slowly, heavily, dragged herself up the stairs.

Upon her return, she found the girl, very straight, very quiet, with moody eyes whose starry quality had been transmuted into slumbering volcanic fire, sitting on the extreme edge of the sofa. She was looking straight ahead.

"And did you find the love letters, Miss Agnes?"

"Love letters! *Love letters!*" The exclamation breathed unutterable scorn. "No! I found—*this!*"

She held the accusing bit of paper at arm's length as if she feared deadly infection. Mrs. Hoops took it from her

with simulated surprise. She read aloud:

"May 20, 19—

"Mr. Varley Colchester

To Jeremiah K. Hoops

Dr.

To 1 lavallière\$500.00

" 1 pearl ring 75.00

" 1 brooch 250.00

Total\$825.00

"Delivered by messenger, as per request, to Mrs. Jack Sylvester, Laurel Lodge, Hill-side Park."

The down-hill characters of the last sentence did not match the smooth penmanship of the rest of the bill and were prevented from running off the page only by a muddy blot.

"Well, I declare!" exclaimed Mrs. Hoops. "One of Jerry's unpaid bills! Doesn't it beat everythin' how careless men are with their business papers? Scatterin' 'em all over the house——"

"Is that Mrs. Jack Sylvester"—the measured accents made Mrs. Hoops think somehow of the counsel for the prosecution—"the one who is mixed up in so many divorces—the one who has her picture in all the Sunday supplements—the one who drives around in a mustard-colored car—the one who has men about her—never women—always men—the one who——"

Mrs. Hoops cringed before the torrent of indignation.

"I wouldn't be at all surprised," she admitted. "But why talk of her, my dear?"

"I *choose* to talk of her!" The girl tilted her chin imperiously. "Tell me one thing, Mrs. Hoops," she commanded. "What is Varley—Mr. Colchester—buying that woman jewelry for?"

"Dearie, don't ask me. You see, it was only a business transaction of Jerry's. I—I——"

"*What is Mr. Colchester buying that woman jewelry for?*"

"Because, my dear"—Mrs. Hoops blurted out the truth in desperation—

"she wouldn't set no great store, I take it, by the things that don't cost money, such as respect, honor, reverence——"

"Oh!" The white-frocked figure shuddered. "Then you mean——" She covered her eyes as if the shame were her own. "Do you know, Mrs. Hoops, that man—that——"

"Insect," supplied Mrs. Hoops.

"Has been making love to me—*me*—after coming from that woman! All the time he's been laughing up his sleeve, I suppose! Oh! Oh!" She crumpled up into a stricken little heap on the purple plush sofa. "I'm so humiliated, so mortified! I let him ki-kiss me! I even wrote a po-poem—about him!"

She went off into sobs of wild abandon.

"Yes, yes, dearie, I understand all about it."

It was an awful risk for Mrs. Hoops to test the structural qualities of the near-French sofa by depositing her bulky weight by the side of the girl, but she took the risk. She gently caressed the fluffy golden hair. Her soothing voice crooned on:

"I wrote a poem myself one time to a worthless person."

The girl checked her convulsive sobs for the moment and peeped from the corner of her damp knot of a handkerchief.

"Yes, to the grocery boy I thought I loved up in New Hampshire. I've got the verses yet. They never got to him, 'cause, all of a sudden, he run away, first emptyin' the cash drawer of five dollars and thirty-nine cents."

The paroxysms recommenced.

"I understand now—why Elaine—died! She couldn't—be expected—to live—in the same world—with that—that false-hearted—Launcelot. I wish—I was a Ca-Catholic. Yes, I do! I'd go—into a cloi—cloister—for the rest—of my life! The world is—too—too cruel!"

She looked up defiantly at Mrs. Hoops.

"Yes, dearie, that's *another* thing I came near doin'. I had the convent all picked out."

"And—you didn't—have the—cour—age?" came the question, still punctuated with little tragic pauses.

"No. I never was cut on the pattern of a heroine, I guess. After I found they didn't allow butter only once a week, I give in. There was lots of things I could get along without, but butter wasn't one of 'em."

The girl suddenly appeared stung by a new thought.

"If there are men like that in the world," she demanded hotly, "why don't girls' mothers tell them about them? Why don't they warn them? Why——"

Emotion and pronouns became inextricably mixed. Mrs. Hoops hedged.

"Well, you see, my dear, perhaps mothers are not so much to blame."

"I don't see why not!" flared the other, with the unsparing judgment of nineteen.

"Because their mothers kept from them the things they ought to know, and the mothers that came before told *their* girls even less. It was a funny sort of modesty, but it was long the fashion."

Thus, on the heads of the collective mothers of the race, did Mrs. Hoops seek to place vicarious blame for Mrs. Armitage's defection. Then, in partial expiation, she herself told the girl things, delicately, pointedly; and the telling was not all on one side. Agnes responded with diffident, but grateful confidence.

"But just a word more for the mothers." Mrs. Hoops looked sideways at the girl to see how she would receive her next remark. "There's this to be said for them—they feel they have a right to trust their daughters. Don't you agree with me, Miss Agnes? That's

why," she went on, receiving no answer, "one dear, sweet girl I know is goin' to her mother this very night and tell her everythin'. *Everythin'*, mind you. She owes it to that mother."

"Not the mother I've got!" flared the girl. "She makes me sick! You don't know her, Mrs. Hoops! You don't have to live with her seven days a week!"

Agnes Armitage terminated the tirade with a frankly appraising sweep of the violet-gold Pompadour room.

"It's not so bad," she decided, with the cruel candor of youth. "But do you know, Mrs. Hoops, what those—those—cats call it? 'The purple horror'! Isn't that the meanest!"

Mrs. Hoops stemmed the outburst with a gentle, but effective gesture of restraint.

"You know why, dear Miss Agnes? They probably ain't studied French history from the bottom 'up, like me. So is it exactly kind to jedge 'em if their taste ain't developed?"

The girl was unconvinced. She felt, she knew, that the room was a cheat, but she was equally positive that the frowzy woman by her side was genuine.

"I think," she said, "there are lots worse things in the world than bad taste and bad grammar." Then, impulsively throwing herself on Mrs. Hoops' ample bosom, "I love you! I do love you! Why didn't God make you my mother?"

An hour later, in the rose-colored seclusion of her dainty room, a young girl was bathing her eyes, preparatory to facing her mother with a confession. It was not going to be an easy confession, and she was striving for the necessary courage to go through the ordeal. On the snowy coverlet of the bed lay the photograph of a gross, self-indulgent masculine face, torn across. The girl felt very, very aged—quite

forty, in fact. In the brief span of two hours, she had tasted love, disillusionment, hate, heartache. It seemed to her that there was nothing left in the whole wide world for her to know or feel.

The mother whom she dreaded to meet, returning home from the double function of an art exhibition for foreign missions and a mothers' meeting, was in an unusually self-satisfied frame of mind. Her essay on "The Perils of Adolescence," delivered before the assembled female parents of the community, had been enthusiastically received. No one, apparently, had suspected that whole paragraphs had been culled, verbatim, from a public-library book. As she turned the corner into the boulevard, she caught sight of a sloppy figure on the Hoops' side porch, and her mood stiffened.

"In the very spot where she was when I left the house!" was her running commentary. "Suppose she's been frittering away a solid afternoon on those unspeakable French mis——"

She blushing hesitated to complete the word even to herself.

Mrs. Hoops was, indeed, bent forward in an attitude of reading. But she was not reading. She was experiencing the rapturous sensation of two adorable white arms flung right around her, of a fresh young face with the peach-bloom of youth upon it pressed close to her own, of a wistful voice saying:

"Why didn't God make you my mother?"

A fat, gilt-edged volume of French court memoirs had long since slid unheeded to the porch floor. It still lay there, gaping neglected. More had been at stake that afternoon than a king's favor—more subtle moves required than even those played on a royal checkerboard. For the time being, Madame de Pompadour was deposited.

All Over *the* Matron's Kid

By Lucy Stone Keller

Author of "In the Green," "Ways of Women," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE

With increasing pleasure we present to the readers of SMITH'S the delightfully varied stories of Mrs. Keller. This one is a jolly Western tale—a humorous adventure that you will enjoy.

THIS story has to begin with a vocabulary. Every book I ever read on "How to Write Short Stories" advises a dynamic beginning—some utterance of breathless interest that will encourage you to wade through whatever may follow. So I apologize for this necessary vocabulary; I've done the best I can to liven it up a little.

(1) *Yellowstone Park*—a place in Wyoming; not seen by going to Europe, and therefore only recently discovered by most Americans.

(2) *Cañon Camp*—a village of blue-and-white-striped tents in the Yellowstone Park, just above the Great Falls of the Yellowstone River. Inhabited by dudes and savages.

(3) *Dudes*—tourists—every variety.

(4) *Savages*—the "educated, refined college people," quoting the transportation company's catalogue—who are employed to take care of the tourists. With experience, they attain to a salary of fifteen dollars a month and an appetite. They are divided into the following classes (a) matrons (b) tent girls (c) dining-tent girls (d) office girls (e) bookkeepers (f) managers (g) camp boys (h) herders (i) drivers (j) dishwashers (k) cooks.

(5) *Rotten-logging*—explains itself when given two young people of opposite sexes, a little moonlight, and an old fallen log in the midst of tall

pine trees. The most satisfactory log will be found three-quarters of a mile below Artists' Point, a trifle to the left of the Pond-lily Swamp. No matron has ever been known to find it.

(6) *Dope*—sawdust soaked in kerosene for the purpose of starting quick fires for shivering dudes.

(7) *Dude Chasing*—a sport indulged in by savages and drivers which often develops into rotten-logging and is held in very low regard by all rules of camp etiquette.

The camp family on this particular summer was a happy one, and, as the catalogue stated, quite educated. Albert, the gentleman dishwasher—he always insisted on the "gentleman" part—was a senior at Ann Arbor; and the six dining-tent girls were each gathering college-theme material for the coming winter. Others of the camp family were already wielders of the chalk and ruler, and were looking up material for other things. The matron was most pedagogical. She lived in the "Home Sweet Home" tent, next the big square office tent. Her daughter, "the matron's kid," aged seventeen and very sweet, lived with her. The remaining savages of Cañon Camp lived on Savage Street, which branched off into "Bridal Boulevard," a row of single tents on the brow of the cañon, reserved for honeymooning tourists.

The camp boys, eight of them, dwelt

in "Happy Holler," a huge tent which emitted various class yells and dramatic outbursts from Shakespeare and Irving Cobb.

"Seldom Inn," as its name suggests, enjoyed the reputation of being the most popular tent in camp, for the simple reason that the four prettiest girls lived in it.

On an evening in August, after the dishes had been wiped and the surviving ones set away in the big cupboards, the four Seldom Inn girls were sitting out on the logs in front of their tent. Down in the dining tent, Albert could be heard briskly slamming pots and pans in and out of the soap suds and singing in his vigorous bass.

"Good land!" ejaculated Ruth, the brownest-eyed of the Seldom Inn girls, "if every one doesn't hurry, we won't have time to plan a thing before we have to go up and sing! Oh, Tommy, come here!" she called to a tall youth who was bounding over the stumps on his way to the log storehouse.

"Horatio! *Avez-vous* seen my dope bucket?" he demanded as he landed in front of them.

"Non, non, my lord. Who on earth wants a fire this early?"

Since the relation of the two countries had become so close, the language of France was being recklessly tampered with at the camp.

"My venomous rival, of course!" gritted Tommy, wickedly brandishing aloft a huge bent iron spoon with which he ladled out dope. "This is the fifth time he's let it go out since dinner."

"Oh, Tommy, surely he hasn't gone to bed! I thought Peggy had a date with him."

Peggy was the matron's kid, wholly beloved by Tommy until the arrival at camp, some days before, of Mr. Kenneth MacCaumber, a famous geologist from Boston, who had twisted Tommy's heartstrings far more brutally than any but Tommy knew. Mr. Mac-

Caumber was all of thirty years old, superior looking in the extreme—and superior acting, *very*, to all the savages except the matron's kid. It was a public fact in camp that Peggy had gone dude chasing four times, *with the consent of the matron*.

And vengeance had to be tasted.

"She *has* got a date with him," confirmed Tommy, carelessly gay, but slightly redder of face. "He has to have hot water for a bath before he can start. He's had eleven pitchers of water already."

"Isn't it the limit," warmly sympathized Jane, the blue eyed and yellow haired, "when every other dude that hit this camp has had to bathe in his tooth mug? I think the matron's crazier about him than Peggy is. Has Wash swiped the bacon yet?"

"Say!" demanded the suddenly visible Wash. "Whadda you think I am? All I can do at once is to build fires, and carry water pitchers, and dig up clean towels that don't exist, and a few other little duties for this old lollypop of a Cucumber. Of all the pig-headed, overbearing, underhanded—"

Just at this eloquent point of his descriptions, a very tall gentleman, with immense eyeglasses and a sardonic smile, appeared around the corner of the tent, and simultaneously Tommy and Wash vanished, their voices coming back joyfully in the tune of "Oh, Where, Oh, Where Can My Little Dog Be."

"Oh, ou, oh, ou can my dope bucket *etre*? Oh, ou, oh, ou can it *etre*?"

"Very musical young men about this camp, aren't there?" pleasantly inquired Mr. MacCaumber.

The four Seldom Inn girls assented gigglingly and without animosity. Of course this dude was a snob, and he had turned the matron's kid's head entirely with his attentions until she was breaking nice old Tommy's heart, and he bragged at the evening camp fires,



Nevertheless, he was tremendously distinguished looking and he was surveying their four pretty faces with evident approval. There was no reason for being cattish to him.

about his hunting adventures in South America, and he was disgustingly clean, and he had to be punished. Nevertheless, he was tremendously distinguished looking and he was surveying their four pretty faces with evident approval. There was no reason for being cattish to him.

"You look lonesome," Jess found voice to say suggestively.

"I am," admitted the young man. "I'm looking for Miss Kent. Have you girls seen her?"

The girls had not, and Mr. MacCaumber sauntered on.

"Doesn't he make you sick?" asked Jess.

"He does!" the others admitted contemptuously, and went their various ways to gather up the camp family for the mass meeting that was to decide the details of Mr. MacCaumber's punishment. Tommy was the only member not present, but Wash reported that he was "having it out" with Peggy down by the storehouse.

"I'll bet *anything* that Peggy'll give it all away yet," grumbled Ruth. "She shouldn't ever have been told a thing about it."

"Ho-ly smoke!" reprimanded Wash caustically. "Always hoping for the worst! If you'll tell me how I could have got that key to the storehouse out of her mother's petticoat pocket without her help, I'll be much obliged. Anyhow, how was a fellow to know she'd go and fall head over heels in love with the rummy in three days' time? And I'll bet anybody my month's salary that she doesn't squeal."

"Sure she won't," agreed the gentleman dishwasher, from the top of Ruth's trunk. "Haven't you got any faith in your sex? What I want to know is where's the bacon? Jane is supposed to have it, but I s'pose she's sneaked off rotten-logging with some driver and——"

"I wish I had! *You* make me tired!" retorted Jane from the step outside. "Hurry up and get things settled. The matron's coming."

"Well, where's the bacon?"

"I'm sitting on it, idiot! And I tell you Mrs Kent is headed this way with her lantern."

The matron and her lantern were never parted from dusk until the curfew at ten. Many a rudely interrupted flirtation lay in the wake of that lantern.

"This is the whole plot," Wash hurriedly put forth in a low voice. "After you girls have finished singing, try and get everybody down to the dance hall that you can; and while old Cucumber is off with Peggy, Tommy and I'll nail the bacon under his bed, and Slivers'll take another piece and make the scent up to the dump pile. Then we'll all sneak out to watch the fun and see how our brave African hero used to shoot big game——"

"Shut up!" commanded Jane's sweet voice in an undertone, just an instant

before the capable hand of the matron pulled back the tent flap and the matron's capable voice said:

"Is Wash here? Oh, of course—always at Seldom Inn. Wash, I wonder if you know where Tommy is. I'd like you and him to change Mr. Mac-Caumber's things into tent 71. It's too noisy for him so close to Happy Holler, and he has some very important notes to make to-morrow. And will one of you girls run over to 71 and see that it's all neat and fresh?"

"You'd better all go," suggested the gentleman dishwasher nonchalantly. "That man'll have nervous prostration if he sees any dust. Why, he found a speck on his plate at dinner, and the things he said to me almost made me ashamed of my position."

"*Albert!*" said the matron reprovingly. "Doesn't any one know where Tommy is?"

"Oh, I'll go help," said Slivers. "I guess Tom's building another fire for Sir Cucumber. He's got the habit."

The matron would have been more than astounded could she have known Tommy's whereabouts at the instant and have heard the words that Tommy's ears were hearing from the lips of her pretty daughter:

"No, I *won't* call off my date, Tom Holmes! And you're not the gentleman I thought you were, either, to keep bothering me this way! It's a perfectly awful thing to do! It may be murder, for all you know!"

"Aw, rot! Old Teddy wouldn't hurt a chipmunk."

"How do you know but what one of the gray grizzlies'll get the scent?"

The matron's kid's eyes grew bigger and bluer at the thought she had just voiced. She was most pleasant to look upon, leaning against a big pine tree, her black curls blowing about her face and her cheeks pink with excitement. But it was a pleasure tintured with torture to Tommy.

"I thought you were so sure he'll shoot him," he scoffed. "It's just as easy to shoot one grizzly as another. You needn't worry. He'll make tracks so fast no bear in this park can stay in 'em."

"Don't judge others by yourself!" returned Peggy acidly.

"Sure I'd run. But I don't sit around telling about elephants and tigers I've made eat out of my hand, do I? *Huh?* All that guy's ever hunted has been little rocks and pretty flowers—and girls."

"Tom Holmes, if you insult me one more time, I'll go straight and tell mother *everything!*"

"Who said anything about you, I'd like to know? I s'pose you think, because he's taken you rotten-logging four nights, you're the only girl he's ever looked at."

Peggy's face grew so pink at this thrust that it glowed almost as rosily as the rays of her mother's lantern in the late dusk. But she chose her words slowly and spoke with crushing dignity and with a subtle sadness that entirely melted Tommy's rancor:

"Now that is going just a little too far, Tom. I've tried to be your friend all summer—and—and I've really liked you. You ought to know me well enough to know what I think about rotten-logging—and how *common* I think any girl is who would do such a thing. Besides, Mr. MacCumber is a *perfect* gentleman, and never even thinks of the *silly, ridiculous* things that the boys and girls in this camp do. And I want you to know that if I hadn't pledged my sacred honor *not* to, I'd tell all about this horrid scheme to—to perhaps murder my friend. I'm *miserable* about it! And then, on top of it all, to have you act this way—when—when I thought you really understood me!"

"Aw, gee, Peg!" He was now the ideally repentant male and leaned closer to her. She shivered and moved away.

"Aw, you *know* I didn't mean anything. Haven't I been as true to you this summer as any boy could be? And I've had plenty of chances to go out with girls, I can tell you—dude girls and girls right in this camp, too. You'd be surprised. That little peach from Kansas City *asked* me to take her to the Lower Falls. But did I? No. I had a date with you—and I *kept it*, even if it was only to sit and smell that old kerosene lantern. But you turned *me* down the first chance you got."

"Oh, do you think so?"

"Well, you fell for this guy, anyhow. And Slivers *saw* him with his arm around you, going down Uncle Tom's Trail. Oh, yes, and you won't even let me take hold of your arm. It's enough to make *any* fellow sore. Believe me, I don't give a hang if Teddy does chew him up a little!"

The matron's kid's eyes lifted mournfully to his, and they were full of tears. *Tears!* She had never done that before. Tommy stared at her, unbelieving, and rumped his already tousled hair with a perplexed hand.

"Oh, Tommy, how *childish* it is to stand here quarreling! Since you feel so bitter about it, I'm afraid I ought to tell, for if the bear *should* hurt him, *I* would be guilty, and mother would be blamed. I'm just almost crazy about it! Oh, *dear!*"

She threw her arm up against the tree and snuggled her face into the rough sleeve of her red sweater. It was nearly dark; owls were beginning to call, and two disturbed little pine sparrows investigated the pair curiously. Tommy was dazed.

"I—I—— Say, listen, Peg. Aw gee, *don't!* I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll put a quietus on the whole blame' thing—tell 'em you're afraid your mother's found out about it—anything you please, if—if you'll do just *one* thing."

"W-what?" mumbled Peggy.

"You know."

"Why, I don't either."

"Aw, you do, too. What you pretty near did last Thursday night."

Silence.

"It'll save you seeing your hero make a record run back to Boston. You ought to do it for his sake," he supplemented.

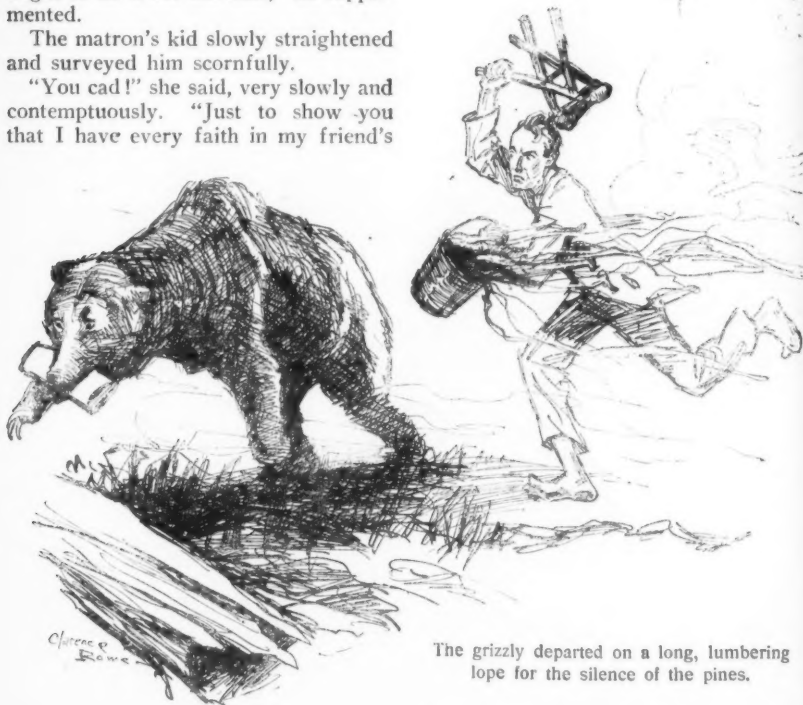
The matron's kid slowly straightened and surveyed him scornfully.

"You cad!" she said, very slowly and contemptuously. "Just to show you that I have every faith in my friend's

he could speak, a flicker of light danced down through the trees. It rather weakened the moment.

"Peggy?" called the matron's voice.

"Yes, mother, I'm coming."



The grizzly departed on a long, lumbering lope for the silence of the pines.

bravery, and that there are people who are honorable enough to keep their word even if it is hard, I'll make a bet with you. I'll let things go on just as they are, and if Mr. MacCaumber *does* run and doesn't shoot the bear, I'll—I'll let you kiss me. But if he acts the way I *know* he will, you are not to speak to me again—ever—so long as you live!"

Tommy thrust both hands deep into the pockets of his somewhat tattered trousers and breathed deeply. Before

"I'm on," said Tommy, miraculously disappearing.

It was his duty to light the evening camp fire, but Slivers had officiated in his stead, so that when he arrived, after a few brief minutes in which to collect and tabulate his scattered emotions, the dudes had gathered about the big fires, each with a well-filled paper cone of popcorn, and were sitting about on the rough benches and logs, listening to Mr. MacCaumber's recital of a thrilling

South American adventure. A look of unholy amusement lighted the face of every savage, except that of the matron's kid. Hers was a little pale, and her eyes were startlingly big.

"Gee, she looks like an angel!" thought Tommy, and, remembering, added a softly breathed, "Golly!"

For some reason, the savages were late that night in gathering about the fire, so they sang only two songs before leading the dudes down to the big log dance hall. At the request of Mr. MacCaumber, they first sang the "Mosquito Song" to the melody of "Kentucky Babe." In this song, the matron's kid took the solo part, and the rest of the savages accompanied with the most realistic z-z-z-z-ing. To-night Tommy could not "z." He was too thoroughly occupied hating the languid Mr. MacCaumber, who sat cross-legged and watched the matron's kid with a look on his face that Tommy longed to knock off. The matron's kid could sing! And with the dancing firelight on her face, she looked like a wild wood sprite. Tommy himself had written the words of her song:

"Skeeters am a-hummin' all around the Cañon Camp.

Scratch, ye cañon dudes.

Up here in the Yellowstone they each one have a lamp

To hunt ye cañon dudes.

They are holdin' camp meetin' up in the tall pine trees,

And are made more sociable by every little breeze.

They try to entertain you,

And it is in vain you

Can drive them away-ay.

Z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z-z," et cetera.

The dudes, led by Mr. MacCaumber, applauded so vigorously that she sang it again; and then the Savage Chorus took up the "Hurrah Song."

"Hurrah for the cañon! Hurrah for the park!

Hurrah for the grizzlies that come down after dark!

Hurrah for the biscuits! Hurrah for the bacon!

Hurrah for the drivers whom dude girls haven't taken!

And we'll eat the cañon popcorn

And sing the cañon songs,

Rallying around the cañon camp fire."

That night the stars were bright in the heavens, and the crowd dispersed rapidly, not all of them to the dance hall. It was with a certain grim satisfaction that Tommy watched the matron's kid and Mr. MacCaumber stroll away into the shadows. But much had to be done in their absence.

Late in the night, when lantern rays shone no longer through tent 71, when rotten-loggers had long since returned, and when a big grizzly found a most enticing scent in the long grass at the edge of the pines, results began to formulate at Cañon Camp. The moon, sailing high above the pine tops, shone down on restless huddlers behind every available stump and boulder in the vicinity of tent 71. Only one wide-eyed little savage was not there. The matron's kid lay, wakeful and miserable, beside the soundly sleeping matron.

Shortly after eleven, a big grizzly came out from the black wall of the pines, his nose in the tall grass as he lumbered along the path. It was a most alluring and unbroken scent which led him straight to tent 71. A hundred yards from the camp, he stopped in the path, lifted his head high in the air, and half turned to the pines again, while every savage breath behind the stumps was held to the bursting point. Tommy prayed. The bear was not Teddy; it was an animal that no one of the savages had ever seen before. It looked capable of swallowing the universe at one gulp. The audience, struck into statues, all attained to something near to prayer. The horrible silence was suffocating. Faintly the roaring of the falls crept into the stillness, and on came the bear. Slowly the great,



"Did—did you walk like this with him?" he asked uncomfortably.

shaggy form approached tent 71, sniffed cautiously about the tent flap, and disappeared.

"He'll sure be killed!" hissed Slivers in terror from behind his stump.

Tommy was past speech. He heard some of the girls whimpering.

Then followed loud scratchings and clawings on the rough board floor of tent 71. Then a circle of brightest light danced about on the tent. It was Mr. MacCaumber's pocket flash light. Immediately the most blood-curdling yell shook the tents of Cañon Camp like a sudden cyclone. The change from stillness into uproar was like the bursting of a bomb. It was past human belief that such an amount of noise could

dwelt in Mr. MacCaumber's languid-looking body. But after the first ear-splitting whoop, Tommy realized that the cry was not of fright, but of conquest. It was one of the bitterest moments of his life.

The grizzly, with five pounds of the company's best bacon in its mouth, departed on a long, lumbering lope for the silence of the pines. Immediately after him bounded a heroic figure, armed with a blazing dope bucket in his left hand and a camp stool in the other. He pursued the enemy some distance, witnessed by a weird and rapidly increasing audience.

The matron and her lantern appeared shortly, the matron

holding a black woolen kimono tightly about her stout figure, the lantern smoking and sputtering. And the matron's kid—the very incarnation of rewarded faith and victory—stood on the stile in front of the office tent, clad in a long dressing gown, her black curls tumbling down her back. Excitement reigned utterly and laid all its laurels at the feet of the calm Mr. MacCaumber. Tommy did not stay to see his rival don them.

But Slivers reported that he had said carelessly:

"Oh, it was nothing—nothing whatever. Frightened? Ha-ha! Why certainly not! I'm used to all sorts of adventures, you know. I imagine this

was just one of the tame old bears that hang around camp, wasn't it? I guess I gave him the scare of his life."

Slivers said that he looked a little surprised when told that the intruder was one of the twelve historic grizzlies that killed whatever happened to annoy them. And Tommy wondered.

Although the savages consoled themselves with half-cooked fudge and stolen canned pineapple until all of two o'clock at Seldom Inn, Tommy went to his cot with a troubled and anguished heart. Investigations would begin the following day, and he had lost the spirit to meet them.

But, strangely enough, no investigation came. For some inexplicable reason, the matron and the camp manager accepted the fact that the bear had just happened into tent 71 as a matter of his own choice. And when Tommy and Wash surreptitiously peeked under the flaps, they found that the nails which had secured the bacon had been pulled out.

"You know," Wash suggested, "I believe the old bum was on to the trick. Maybe he has a decent streak, after all."

"Not on your life!" grunted Tommy.

But he wondered harder than ever. Mr. MacCaumber and the matron's kid had gone on horseback to Sulphur Springs to examine the rock formation. Tommy had had to saddle the horses for them, and Peggy had looked over, beyond, and through him, and had not seen him at all. And the comments of the other savages had ceased to be comforting. Tommy lost his desire for food, and the matron told him he was looking very badly and made him take some brown medicine which she gave to everybody for everything.

The second night was consumed with horrible nightmares, in which the matron's kid alternately fed him to bears and tortured him with every evidence of affection for Mr. MacCaumber.

When he closed his eyes, he could see nothing but the figure of his enemy, clothed in those heavy gray sleeping garments, bounding majestically after the fleeing grizzly.

On the third day, Mr. MacCaumber departed, on the front seat of the first stage. And Peggy waved him farewell until the last turn in the trees. And Tommy continued not to eat.

That night, at the camp fire, Wash handed him a note with the scribbled message:

I must tell you something. Meet me at the dance hall.

PEGGY.

All Tommy's pride called to him to ignore the message, and to scorn her. But pride, at nineteen, is not all-powerful. So Tommy met her. Without words, they vanished together and silently found the path—the mystic, luring path that leads to the Lower Falls.

"You told him," he said, not bitterly, for Peggy's arm was caught tightly in his and her warm finger tips nestled consolingly in his big hand.

"I know I did, Tommy. I just had to. I was afraid that he *might* run."

Tommy reflected. After all, what use to delve into the reasons of women?

"Did—did you walk like this with him?" he asked uncomfortably.

She laughed softly.

"No, you silly! He's engaged to my cousin, back East. I've known him ever since I was a tiny baby. I just had to tease you a little bit, Tommy. You were *so* funny. Do you hate me, Tommy?"

Tommy did not.

"You've broken your word about the bet," she told him—but not until they were on their way home. "You weren't ever to speak to me again."

"Just as soon," said Tommy masterfully, "as we get in the shadow of that old tree, there, you're going to break your word about our bet."

"That'd only be fair, wouldn't it?" agreed the matron's kid.

Window Wishing

By Lucille Van Slyke

Author of "The Bloom on Seven Peaches," "His Famous Deed," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY FREDERICK B. TURTON

The love story of a young man who had his eyes opened just in time.

THE Ladylove could manage almost anything without anybody's suspecting that she'd managed it. Sometimes it took her quite a time, but she always did it. I more or less suspect it was she who managed the elopement. Anyhow, it was a beautifully planned elopement. At eight o'clock on a sparkling September morning, Jeff Hudson drove his little old car out of his father's barn, stopped exuberantly at the Ladylove's side porch, and kidnaped her under the very eyes of her unsuspecting husband, with half the village gossips looking on!

And although the little old car wasn't much to look at, and he'd owned it only a week, it landed them at eight o'clock that evening at his altogether delightful bachelor apartment on Gramercy Square—a good three-hundred-and-eight-mile run which left the Ladylove so limp and weary that he almost carried her into the big leather chair beside the wee fire that glowed in the quaint old grate.

Oh, but he was vain of that apartment! He'd had it only a month, a month that had been preceded by eleven years of the most virulent form of hall bedroom, years that wouldn't have been endurable if they hadn't been lightened by dreams; and one of the dearest dreams had been the kiss with which he welcomed the Ladylove, as he leaned over the chair exultantly and murmured:

"You're here!"

The small person in the chair was used to eloping. Indeed, it had been the *Ellis Village Gazette's* account of her first affair that had given her her name, for ever since the florid paragraph announcing "—and his ladylove arrived in town yesterday after a brief honeymoon," no one had called her anything else. But for all that she was used to it, she was a bit tremulous as she smiled up at Jeff.

"My sakes, son! I'm scared yet! I don't believe your father will remember to take his hot water and soda before breakfast, and I do feel as if Sarah wasn't to be trusted with the birds! Just think, Jeff, it's the first night I've been away from your father in most thirty-five years! I do declare it scares me!"

Yet they had planned it scores of times and ways. During those first awful years when Jeff had been storming New York, the Ladylove had frequently "saved up" for the trip and, during the later years, Jeff himself had frequently sent her generous checks that had been intended to bring her to him; but always, mysteriously, somebody or other in her altogether too large family had needed something or other more than mother had thought she needed a trip to New York. I don't suppose Jeff would ever have got her there if it hadn't been for the little old car.

Like most long anticipated pleasures,

this particular realization was not unalloyed bliss. The Ladylove was "scared" not only that first night—she was scared all the time. She was so afraid of the rush and the roar of the city that she wouldn't stir without Jeff at her side. She was so afraid of the enormous Dane pup that guarded his hearth rug that she couldn't tinker with the fire. And she was so afraid of the impassive Jap boy who presided over the kitchen that she didn't dare to fry crullers or mix biscuits, though her fingers just itched for the flour sieve.

But most of all she was afraid of Jeff himself. For every instant that he was with her, in numberless ways, he disclosed himself as a very strange Jeff. He was no longer the careless boy who had left her a decade ago; neither was he the flattering, rollicking visitor who had come back to her at heavenly intervals. This new Jeff was a very different Jeff from either. It was in vain that she tried to tell herself, as she lay awake nights in his richly ascetic bedroom—he wouldn't let her have the living-room sofa, no matter how she begged—that it was just New York that made him seem different. In her heart of hearts, she knew that he was no longer her boy. For all that he still looked gloriously like "her folks," a thousand and one times he had unconsciously revealed himself as the living embodiment of the man she had hated more than any one else in the world—reliant, shrewd, complacent Grandpa Hudson!

To look at crumpled little Nancy Hudson, you wouldn't have guessed that she could have hated any one; not unless you'd lived in Ellis Village thirty-five years ago and known how bitterly Grandpa Hudson had resented Nancy's eloping with his son; not unless you'd watched Nancy fight her way along all the years, going without everything a woman can go without save her delightfully incompetent husband and

her five triumphantly splendid children; going without everything, while a crotchety old man who wouldn't forgive her recklessly scattered what righteously belonged to her children among half a dozen already richly endowed institutions. That part of Grandpa Hudson's revenge Nancy had endured smilingly. He hadn't taken away anything that really mattered, she said.

But suddenly, after all the years, Grandpa Hudson had "got back at her," for the essence of all that she had hated in him laughed out at her mockingly from her own Jeff's eyes.

Sometimes, in her uneasy dreams in those restless nights, her tired mind confused the two men, and she would awaken so illogically resentful that her hauteur made Jeff stare at her in amazement.

They disagreed about everything. On the morning of the third day—the day that he had planned to spend amusing her with all kinds of delicious surprises—they disagreed before the day was started! The Jap boy brought in their letters before breakfast. Bless her heart, how Nancy blushed over Jeff, senior's, sprawling "Dear Ladylove!" Not even five children and three grandchildren could take away the thrill of seeing it written for the first time in Jeff, senior's, writing! Otherwise it was a very prosaic letter. There was nothing in it worth reading to Jeff, junior, save the news of an exceedingly youthful cousin's marriage. Her son, casually buttering a muffin, calmly expressed it as his opinion that a baby of eighteen ought not to be allowed to marry. And the Ladylove retorted coolly that she herself had not been eighteen until the week after he was born.

"Exactly," Jeff drawled. "And what did a chit like that know about what she was doing? And dad himself barely twenty-one! How could you tell

anything about what sort of a chap he was going to be?"

"I don't know as I could have picked out any better parent for my children, not even if I'd waited till I was thirty-four!" She pretended she didn't get the kiss he blew at her. "When your father was your age, he——"

"Was a perfectly good father to five of us," Jeff interrupted. "I know. And I appreciate what it all meant. But going through what we did as a family made me pretty darned sure I wasn't going to bring any kiddies into this world until I had enough of this world's goods so that their mother wouldn't have to go without everything a woman must long for——"

"Most everything I ever really hankered after long, your father saw that I got it some time or other." Nancy's lips were trembling.

Jeff leaned across the table and kissed her hand.

"You darling little liar!" he murmured passionately. "You know you didn't! So put on your bunnit! We're going out after some of the things you missed."

Eternally feminine, she wouldn't let things rest there. A dear, dumpy little figure, she stood beside him, her hand on his shoulder.

"I s'pose we were pretty young, Jeff. But, you see, we couldn't help it. Your father, he just fell in love with me the very day I stepped out of the stage-coach in Ellis Village."

"And lived happy ever after!" he mocked her good-humoredly. "All the same, you can just bet that this Jeff took good care that nothing like that happened to him. Love at first sight is a little too expensive for this chap! I couldn't fall in love that way if I tried. And I wouldn't try, muzzie. I'd duck for——"

"Missy Luthyfol"—tellyfloam," interrupted Kato.

Jeff flushed a bit, and came back

from a good-humored phone bantering and smiled at his mother.

"Hurry up! The fun's begun! We've a busy day ahead. The best-looking woman in the world is going to have luncheon with us! So we'll go buy a new necktie for me and a new bunnit for you——"

Darling, cantankerous Ladylove! More frightened than ever, she stood her ground valiantly.

"I guess, Jeff Hudson, if you're going to be ashamed of the clothes your father buys for me, I'd better stay right here with the dog!"

"I guess, Nancy Hudson," he parried lightly, "if you're going to be ashamed of the things your son is going to buy for you, you'll be spanked and put to bed without your supper. Why, muzzie"—he tilted her chin and smiled down at her—"you wouldn't want to queer me with the girl I might be going to let fall in love with me!"

She was all contrition.

"Jeff darling!" Her eyes shone. "You do joke so! I didn't understand! Oh, why didn't you say so before? Oh, Jeff, what is she like?"

"Easy!" he cautioned. "Wait and see! You can't see her till one o'clock, and we're going out and buy all kinds of fixings. I want her to be just crazy about you. And when we sit down to lunch, you're going to look her all over, and then, if you like her, why you'll say very casually, 'Let's have some melon,' and if you don't—why, just order consommé!"

She didn't speak again till they were skimming up the Avenue in the little old car.

"As if it would make any difference whether I like her or not!"

"It absolutely will," Jeff assured her stoutly, stopping neatly at the traffic cop's signal. "I haven't encouraged the designing young creature too much yet." The complacency in his laughing tones fairly maddened Nancy; it



"Most everything I ever really hankered after long, your father saw that I got it some time or other." Nancy's lips were trembling.

sounded so exactly like Grandpa Hudson's oft reiterated "My policy is to go slow." "If you don't happen to like her, I shall tell her firmly that I shall not wed her. You—er—haven't any other plans for my future, have you?"

He was trying his hardest, poor chap, to coax the strained, tired look from her beloved face. This time he did rouse a flash of fun.

"I certainly have, son," she responded roguishly. "I planned for you to have one of the Lanier girls."

He fairly shouted as he let the car spin ahead.

"Those funny little frumps! Was that why you always had one of 'em to supper every time I came home? Why, they were poor as church mice and too scared to speak up in meetin'!"

"You did scare them, Jeff, you were so cityish with them. They never did act like themselves when you were around. But they are such—well, homy girls."

"All safely home now, eh? Seems

as if I got wedding cards regularly every season."

"The littlest one isn't married."

"And she's about twelve, eh? Didn't she fall out of a swing the time before last that I was home?"

"And you picked her up and carried her in and scolded her for swinging so high. She was as mad as hops at you. She said, 'Thank you! I'll swing just as high as I please and you can't stop me!' And it wasn't the time before last when you were home; it was 'most eight years ago. She's more than twenty years old now, Jeff Hudson."

"How time do fly!" he agreed flipantly. "Now, then, here's where we jump out and leave our boat. From here on, we're going to walk back down this street, the ab-so-lute-ly most wonderful street in the world, and we're going to stop at every last window and look for things to buy for a Ladylove."

She trotted obediently at his side and honestly tried to enthuse over those aluring windows, but she couldn't because they awed her so. The only things in which she showed any human interest were a man's dressing gown, some small pinafores, a chocolate ice-cream soda, and an enormous gilt-framed painting of a lion dying in a desert!

She explained, when he laughed at her, that she had always sort of hankered for a nice picture for the dining room. But somehow, even while he was thinking of that bare, shabby dining room, his laugh stopped short. Bitter resentment rose within him that any one so altogether sweet, so altogether dear, as the Ladylove should have had so little in life. She hadn't even enough spunk left in her to want things for herself! Such self-abnegation was wicked!

Her gentle chuckle broke in upon his reflections. She was staring at a window full of priceless rubbish and the particular thing that had provoked her

mirth was a gilded-willow, rose-decked telephone booth labeled: "Suggested for your Country House Boudoir."

"Jeff!" she gasped. "Folks won't really buy such trash, will they? And look at that pink gluepot! My stars, nobody will buy that!"

"Oh, yes, they will," he assured her soberly.

He was thinking that the last time he had passed this window, he had been with Charlotte Rutherford, and he was remembering how they had turned back so that she could go in and purchase scores of absurdly expensive dance favors.

"Oh, muzzie," he murmured, "that's the trouble. We were so gehovaly poor always, we didn't even know that anything else but bread and cheese existed. We can't even see the need of that sort of thing." He waved his hand idly at a pile of gayly painted garden tools. "We're too scared to wish for anything but necessities. But now you take Charlotte Rutherford. She's the girl who's coming to lunch with us. Her whole feeling is different. She's had this sort of thing"—his shrugging shoulders indicated the entire Avenue—"all her life. I don't mean she's disgustingly rich, or a spendthrift," he interpolated hastily, "but I mean that she's got the poise that comes from knowing she can have what she wants in this world. If she should marry a chap"—he drew a long breath—"she wouldn't marry him for what he could give her, because she's had about everything there is. I mean, I couldn't give her anything she's never had—"

"Except yourself," snapped his mother almost ferociously. "Oh, Jeff, I don't care a bit what she's had or what she can get herself. The only thing that matters about a woman is—*what's she going to want?*"

She spoke so passionately that she startled him. But after that one outburst, she was meek enough, almost si-

lent, as he led her from shop to shop, purchasing things to his heart's content. She even let him have his way about the hairdresser's, and came forth, after half an hour in a curtained booth, blushing like a girl and looking a good ten years younger, because the little crippled Frenchman who wielded the tongs thought she looked like his own mother. When they were back in the apartment, Kato literally staggered under the parcels he had to carry from the little old car.

Jeff was in the gayest of humors. It was so altogether delicious to hear his mother asking sly questions about Miss Rutherford. Just to hear the immaculately groomed and self-sufficient Charlotte dubbed "your best girl" was enough to make him hug himself with glee. And how he beamed with pride when the Ladylove stepped shyly from his bedroom and looked up at him from under an absolutely perfect hat brim!

"You little old queen!" he exulted, as he held her at arm's length. "You stick around with me a while longer and you'll be looking like a permanent inhabitant of our village!"

She stayed a queen about sixty seconds—just until Kato handed her a telegram reading, "Baby brother arrived this morning. Hope you can get noon train."

It was in vain that Jeff stormed.

"If they've telegraphed, they have to have me." She was so pathetically proud that they wanted her! "You don't know one thing about it, Jeff." There was a tense line of worry in her forehead. "I knew I'd no business coming—not when there was this chance that Baby Brother might up and come the minute I slipped out of Ellis Village! Oh, I do wish I was home! Nobody but me knows where those old blankets and linens are!"

He comforted her as best he could, but the next half hour was merely a

blur of packing and tickets and telegrams. He tried to distract her with gentle foolery as he took her bag from Kato, when they dismissed him at the station.

"Good gracious, muzzie, what's in this bag? Have you been buying gold bricks?"

"Why, Jeff Hudson!" she exclaimed. "What an absent-minded thing I am getting to be! To think that I haven't even taken that quince-jam honey out of that grip! I should think I'd have thought of it the minute we spoke of the Lanier girls. I put in"—she was struggling with the bag, rummaging in its depths—"two or three jars for Kathie Lanier. She always did relish it. And from the letters she's been writing to Grace lately, I think she's just a mite homesick. I thought some quince-jam honey"—she pressed an absurd package, wrapped in the *Ellis Village Gazette* and tied with pink yarn, into her son's hands—"would cheer her up a lot. In fact, until you told me you had a best girl, I'd sort of thought we'd look Kathie up, with this for an excuse. She's in a library. They say it's at the corner of Fifth Avenue. You probably know where it is. Maybe that Japanese could take it over."

It was an impossible package. Kato would have scorned it. And, anyhow, Kato was gone. After the train had left, Jeff stood outside the station wondering whether he'd better call a messenger or make a quick dive for the library. He was just squinting at a clock when Miss Rutherford hailed him.

"You look so awfully droll!" she confided, as he helped her from her motor. "Where on earth did you get the bomb?"

"It's quince-jam honey," he responded woodenly.

"For luncheon?" she teased, as they sauntered through the hotel corridor.

"No, I just brought it to shock the hat boy. Watch his nose while I'm checking!"

She tucked her arm through his in the crowded end of the corridor.

"I'm perfectly sure I'm going to shock your mother," she half whispered. "I feel in an absolutely cocky mood to-day."

He explained about his mother's departure.

"Well, she's spared *me*, anyhow, the poor dear!" she laughed. "But isn't it cunning and old-fashioned of her to dash off to see a squirmy, wee thing like a new baby?" She shivered slightly. "I saw one once. They're rather awful. I decided then and there, if I had any kiddies ever, I wouldn't even look at them till they'd grown curls and teeth and could boast a decent complexion—say not till they were three or four if they were boys or sixteen if they were girls! Oh, I do hope you've a window table reserved! If you haven't, let's go somewhere else. I want to see everything in the world to-day. I just couldn't sit in the back-ground!"

She positively sparkled with good humor. He liked her very sophisticated hat and the smart simplicity of her frock. He liked the quiet poise with which she leaned back in the great carved chair and smiled at him. He was very, very proud of being with her.

"I hated it because mother made me ride down with her. I wanted to walk," she chattered. "Take me walking after luncheon, will you? I want to walk a million miles, and I think I want to walk on air. We don't have to meet mother till almost four, and we can just walk miles *and* miles!"

He'd never seen her in so gay and excited a mood.

Quite naturally the "miles *and* miles" merely retraced the steps that Jeff and his mother had taken in the morning.

Indeed, it was while they paused before the window that displayed the gilded telephone booth which had so amused Nancy that it struck home to Jeff how hard it would be to explain the Ladylove and the Best Girl to each other.

"Isn't that the cleverest?" he heard Charlotte's eager voice. "Phones are so ugly!"

"Do you want it?" he asked lightly.

She didn't answer him. Already she was at the next window, critically eying some old English prints.

"The only thing that matters about a woman is—*what's she going to want?*" He could almost hear the Ladylove's husky, sweet voice. He drew a long breath. After all, it was a perfectly fair test.

"Let's pretend," he suggested slowly, "we've a fairy godmother along. Let's pick out all the things you think you'd like to have."

Her nod of appreciation was gay, almost childish.

"Just for game?"

Grave and very good looking, he half smiled at her. She was so beautifully tall that their eyes were nearly on a level.

"It's not exactly a game. You're just to point out what you'd take if you could have exactly what you want."

"I couldn't. They wouldn't have it all in a window. Tell you something." She was striding along, her head high. "Dad and I are rowing awfully. It's about something I want, and I've my own money that grannie left to me to spend as I please. But he says it's foolish. I can't see that it's any of his affairs. Indeed, he ought to be glad that I want to do something so practical. I want some dogs. I've a chance at some really good Pekingese—not just one or two, you understand, but enough to start a kennel—and I've a young architect in tow who has wonderful ideas for a beautiful building for them. They're perfect darlings! I'd have

every blue ribbon in the country before the year was over. He acts, -dad does'—her voice quivered slightly—"positively medieval about it. Simply won't consent. So, first—if you really want to know what I'd get—it would be just oodles and oodles of Pekinese!"

"And then?" he suggested.

He was vaguely conscious of disappointment, even while he argued subconsciously, "Hang it! It's no crime for a girl to want a few dogs!"

"And then"—she stopped dramatically before a jeweler's window—"I'd have rubies! Do you know, there's never been a really decent ruby in our family until this morning? I simply hate every bit of jewelry mother's wearing. It's badly designed and looks just plain tawdry to me. And not a ruby! Oh, don't you love rubies! Aren't they just fire and blood and life! Look!" She pulled back her glove. "I've plunged already. Isn't that really a beauty?"

On her slender hand, the great stone fairly burned. It wasn't only that it was so large and that its setting was so severely simple; it was the color and



She fairly whirled into the shop to order it, asking idly, after she'd given the address, for the price and shrugging with dismay when she heard it.

the depth of it. Jeff glanced from it to her glowing young eyes.

"It's splendid," he agreed faintly.

She snapped the glove fastening.

"Ra-ther vain and bold I are, aren't I?" she laughed. "The truth is I was miffed you didn't notice it at luncheon. You're the very first one who's seen it. I haven't dared let the family get a glimpse. Dad's so difficult lately."

They loitered beside a florist's, smiling at the Japanese dwarf gardens. One she couldn't resist at all. She fairly whirled into the shop to order it, asking idly, after she'd given the ad-

dress, for the price and shrugging with dismay when she heard it.

She laughed ruefully when they were in the street once more.

"That's just the way!" she murmured plaintively. "I meant to be so economical to-day! And then you start a game that psychologically undoes me! You're a most reprehensible person for me to associate with! I shall do penance. I shall get down to something serious." She rummaged daintily for her shopping list. "I shall do errands. I positively hate to do errands in the afternoon. And you shall go with me because you're to blame for my buying that garden. First we have to—mnnmm—go for cigarettes. I'm getting a wonderful sort lately, in that shop two blocks down from here. The whole family snitches them from me. And I don't blame them, for they are simply *delish!*"

She filled her case with deft fingers from the box that the deferential salesman extended toward her directly they entered the shop.

"Treat you to some?" she suggested, smiling at Jeff. She consulted her wrist watch anxiously. "Do you know, we've dawdled awfully? We'll have to hurry. I must get my slippers if I never do another thing to-day. You'll just love them. And the shop is such fun! Don't you dare laugh when we get there, though I know you'll find it hard not to. They take themselves so seriously. You'd think slippers were poems or paintings, to hear them talk. You never heard such twaddle!"

He never had. But one thing he did have to admit—if the shopkeeper and his ladylike male assistant did talk absurdities, the slippers themselves deserved enthusiasm.

There were four pairs of them. First came a pair of gold brocade that made her slender feet look like Midas' daughter's. Then followed sedate black satins; that is, they looked sedate until

the deferential fitter put them on—then they looked alluringly naughty. She frowned a bit over that pair. She was worried for fear the vamps were too long. She couldn't endure vamps that were too long. But the exquisite blue-and-silver ones with the rosebuds made her eyes glisten.

"Aren't they darling?" she demanded. "Isn't it a shame that everybody can't come to a boudoir party? Don't you think they're much too pretty to be always just in my room?"

Last of all, she made him admire a glowing pair of flame-colored velvet embroidered in gold.

"They're to wear with my ruby," she explained, as she leaned to gloat over them, letting her arch glance slip back to him over her lovely shoulder. "I've always had just meek little *débutante* shoes before, but lately— Oh, I don't know what's the matter lately!" She finished when they were outside the shop, letting her hand touch his arm impulsively, "I feel all the while as if I were—dad's raciest racer when she's been shut in too long! Did you ever feel that way?"

The September sun, shining upon her bronze-and-pink loveliness, fairly dazzled him.

"Good-by!" she murmured regretfully. "I suppose mother's been waiting in here ages. I loved your party and I'm so sorry I didn't meet *your* mother. She must be awfully clever"—her voice grew unconsciously patronizing—"to be able to make quince jam and everything!"

Suddenly, for no accountable reason, he hated Madison Square, he hated every bit of Fifth Avenue. He was very angry with the Ladylove. What business had she to judge a girl like Charlotte? And then he squared his shoulders as he remembered that the Ladylove hadn't even seen—his "best girl."

Rummaging for a match, his fingers

encountered the hat boy's check for the jam. He walked uptown almost viciously in his hurry to get the absurd errand over with. He marched defiantly up the library steps and fairly insulted the doorman.

"Sure I know a girl named Lanier," responded that individual. "You can go down that corridor and take the elevator, or I can send a messenger with your package——"

"Thanks. That will do nicely."

Jeff sighed with relief as the pink yarn and the *Gazette* left his hands. He'd already started down the steps when the doorman hailed him.

"There's some one calling you."

"Some one" proved to be Glen Stafford, pompous and puffing in his eagerness to reach the younger man.

"Just the chap I've been trying to get in touch with all day!" he wheezed. "Phoned your office a dozen times, and your apartment, too. It's about the Wells matter."

They halted while Stafford explained. Jeff drew his breath in relief; he fairly plunged into the matter that Stafford was discussing. Mothers and Charlottes and quince jams were forgotten completely. Alert and ready, he listened. Five minutes, ten minutes, the impressive Stafford talked on, Jeff nodding and answering, when suddenly he was aware of a soft voice speaking. Perhaps it was the "up-State" accent that caught his ear.

"No, I'm not ill, Jimmie, thank you." The doorman's throaty murmur almost blurred her soft voice. "Yes, I did get the bundle. It's here. It—it's from my old home, Jimmie, and it—gave me the weeps! Wasn't that silly? So Miss Slosson said to run along—and now I'm going window wishing."

Down the steps she tripped, an absurdly small figure in blue serge, low black shoes like a boy's, with funny rounded toes, and a soft felt tam pulled hurriedly over her rather untidy brown

hair. Jeff was actually close enough to see the tear-wet lashes resting on her pale cheeks as she swept by him, her bundle of paper and pink yarn tucked schoolgirl fashion in the crook of her arm.

Jeff no longer heard Stafford. All he could hear was "window wishing!" And suddenly, without in the least understanding why, he wanted, more than anything in all this world, to know what that shabby little person would wish for.

"I beg your pardon," he murmured to the great Glen Stafford. "I'm in a mischief of a hurry. I'll see you any time you say—to-morrow. You can phone my office when you want me. Sorry!"

The Avenue was its busiest and gayest now. He almost lost her. He wouldn't have found her at all if it hadn't been for the traffic cop who was escorting her grandly over the crossing. The officer was thanking her for the books she had given his "bye," and the color came into her pale cheeks as she listened to his good-natured blarneying. They seemed to be the best of friends. Jeff frowned over it. But he followed her little cap, nevertheless, and grinned at her first stop.

Fishing tackle! She eyed books of flies professionally. No girl born in the heart of the trout-fishing country could have resisted that window. Jeff himself had lingered there often. Still, it wasn't just the regular thing for a girl to wish for. Nor was it the regular thing for a girl to march so rapidly past window after window of alluring clothes. If he'd known just a little more about women, he might have seen that she didn't dare let herself glance at them!

She went four straight blocks without stopping. Then she spent exactly three minutes, forty seconds, at a toy-shop display. She inspected every last article in that window very deliber-



Jeff was actually close enough to see the tear-wet lashes resting on her pale cheeks as she swept by him.

ately. And she giggled aloud over a basket of colored balloons that were kept in motion by a hidden electric fan.

Jeff was utterly disgusted. His mother was perfectly right; you could judge women by what they wanted, all right, and the kind of girl who wanted toy balloons wasn't worth following. All the same, he couldn't leave her just then, for next door to the toys, she stopped short. A real-estate office! With a tiny model of a white colonial cottage, complete even unto a fence and a microscopic rose vine over a wee

trellis! She almost pressed her deliciously retroussé nose against the pane. Her eyelashes hinted tears again. And Jeff himself blew his nose. For that alluring cottage was not unlike the old Lanier home in Ellis Village—not unlike Ladylove's own shabby little house.

But he could grin a minute later, when his quarry dashed impetuously into a milliner's shop. He had to loiter a full five minutes there. But he could watch her through the thin lace panels, while she argued about a quill with a good-humored shopgirl. Eventually a slightly damaged one was brought out; Jeff decided that it was damaged because they both bent over it, cutting away a considerable portion of it. There was a breathless moment in which the tam-o'-

shanter came off—a moment in which deft fingers tidied brown hair, while the milliner fastened the quill to the cap. The pantomime of paying was delicious, for she carried her money in her boyish breast pocket and patted the pocket when she put the change back. Her hands were quite free to resume the burden of the jam. He knew that she was telling the milliner about it, and he liked that haughty salesperson because she smiled at the girl's enthusiasm.

The window wisher was an entirely

different person when she stepped back into the street. It was wonderful what the quill had done to her appearance. She walked with a consciously proud lift of her shoulders; she eyed herself with naïve content in every mirror that she passed; there was color in her cheeks and a sparkle in her eyes. She was simply absurdly vain of her new possession.

In the next fifteen minutes, at jerky intervals, Mr. Thomas Jefferson Hudson halted discreetly some five paces behind Miss Kathie Lanier while she surveyed:

A black-and-orange-and-gray poster in a steamship office on which a Chinese juggler hinted at the charms of the Orient.

Four old violins on a brocaded cushion. Her eyes were pools of longing, and Jeff remembered suddenly that Daddy Lanier had always "fiddled evenings."

A windowful of books. She wasn't able to resist them; she dodged unhesitatingly into the store, but came out so quickly, and with such a twinkle of fun in her eyes, it was evident that the price she was asked had been so far beyond the amount in the breast pocket as to be absolutely humorous.

After that she walked slowly, just watching persons. She had apparently forgotten windows when suddenly the next corner fairly hypnotized her. Jeff felt a little ashamed of watching her. Her eyes were wide like a child's; her lips were parted gently; her breath came quickly.

EVERYTHING FOR HIS MAJESTY, KING BABY.

She wasn't greedy, anyway. She didn't want—everything. But one little cap in the corner tempted her most awfully. She put her gloved hand to her cheek as she looked at it; she was artlessly oblivious of the passing throng as she dreamed her little dream amid

the clamor. Somehow he could tell that her heart beat in a beautiful silence.

They were at Twenty-eighth Street now. She turned sharply into the side street and bought some popcorn from a vender, then went straight into the yard of the Little Church Round the Corner, while Jeff's lips curled at the idea of her munching it there. He was more than ready to quit at that particular moment.

But, oh, the grace with which she fed the wheeling pigeons in the twilight, scattering the last puffy grain on the flagged path under the lovely gloom of the Booth window, toward which she blew a tiny kiss! That he knew was for her grandfather, who'd been a worker in stained glass.

At Fourth Avenue, she was almost knocked down, by a gilded delivery motor blazoned with the name of Charlotte's cobbler. It gave Jeff, fifty yards away, a bigger jolt than it gave the girl, who was laughingly thanking the plumber's 'prentice who'd saved her. She sped away so quickly that he would have lost her entirely if it hadn't been for the rakish semaphore of the new quill.

Then ten minutes of just fun, while Miss Lanier dodged in and out of small shops under the elevated, and bargained for a wilted-looking part of lettuce—that is, it looked wilted until the wheedling salesman pulled away the outer leaves—a small melon, fat rolls—the baker woman winked as she threw in a currant bun for luck—and one thin lamb chop from a huge butcher. The girl looked much too little beside the butcher.

When she emerged, with her arms full of bundles, Jeff wanted to whoop with glee because in one paper bag, with its head peering wildly from the frilly top, was an agitated kitten.

"I'm so much obliged." Her low voice fairly sang her gratitude. "I've

awfully wanted a kitten. Home, we always had a kitten."

"They's no use to me till they're cats," said the butcher.

"Oh, cats!" sniffed Miss Lanier, wrinkling her nose haughtily. "They're no use at all to me when they're cats! I loathe cats! But kittens are just—cuddly!"

One block over and two blocks down in the twilight of a discreet street full of boarding houses, which mercifully did not look so shabby at night as they did in the morning, Jeff lost her. He never knew exactly how it could have happened, when he was watching so closely. Once, as he searched wildly, he thought he glimpsed her head at an upper window; a flaring gas jet let a woman's charming silhouette show clearly, as slender arms reached to lift a flower pot from a sill. But the slatternly Finnish maid who answered his ring insisted that there was no one named Lanier in that house. And the people next door were congenitally weak-minded. And next door to that they were absolute imbeciles.

Followed a long evening, wherein Kato was exasperatingly stupid, and the wee fire smoked, and the lazy dog would do nothing but snore. Sometimes Jeff stared at Charlotte's picture over the fireplace. Sometimes he frowned at the faded kodak print of the Ladylove in his watch case. Sometimes he set his jaw exactly like Grandpa Hudson. It would have broken Nancy's heart to see him then. But sometimes he smiled like "her folks" and shook his head.

At exactly eight-thirty-five the next morning, the doorman at the library directed a stern young man to the children's room. At eight-thirty-seven the young man glimpsed a girl through the window of the leather-covered swing door. Its oval made an altogether lovely frame for her. Her hair was morning smooth and shiny, she wore an

immaculately fresh blouse, rather like a boy's, and she was bending to listen to the wishes of a small borrower, an argumentative borrower. She held a pencil in her hand—it was a very professional pencil with a stamp attached—and as the door swung to admit the young man, she dated the borrower's card decisively.

"Don't fuss. I know you'll like this lots better. We don't bother with such stupid books as 'Dead-eye Dick.' Now, sonny, around and out. Push the turnstile hard. Isn't that fun? What is it you want, please?" she asked respectfully, not even looking up at Mr. Thomas Jefferson Hudson.

He cleared his throat tentatively. As he had explained less than twenty-four hours before to the Ladylove, he would never fall in love at first sight, so of course he must begin by saying something casual. He never knew exactly what he meant to say. For somehow his eager hand touched her firm young fingers, and he lost all control of the chatty little phrase with which he had planned to introduce himself. What he said was:

"I want you to marry me! That's what I want! You don't know how I want it, but—but—I've a little old car, and we—we—could go and get a license and come back to—to—where you fed the pigeons, and—I'll be just as good to you as dad has been to Ladylove, and—even if you don't feel as I do yet—"

At this point he stopped, utterly horrified. She had pulled her hand away; she had dropped her professional pencil and was holding to the desk with both hands. She was a little afraid to look at him, but after a heartbreakingly long moment, she dared.

"Yes, I do—feel as you do—Jeff Hudson," she whispered. "Yes, I do!" Her glowing eyes were unashamed. "I—I've felt that way—ever since that day I was swinging too high!"

Your Loving Friend, Priscilla Jane

By Ruth Herrick Myers

Author of "Columbia," "Fifty-Fifty," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY S. R. ASPELL

She was only a little girl, but her patriotic heart and deep interest in human beings brought about a most happy event.

THE round-eyed gaze of a child, oblivious to fortifications, can search out and expose the naked heart disconcertingly. Priscilla Jane's eyes always did that. They were dark, velvety, lusciously warm, deep eyes and they looked from soul to soul.

Priscilla Jane and her mother were down at Red Cross headquarters, after more yarn, when the soldier came in. He looked as if he had just slipped from blue overalls into khaki, this tow-headed country boy, without the intermediary gradations of serge and white collars. It was all new, the big city and the army camp, the whole great, cosmopolitan outside world, so well-poised, so sure of itself, so amazingly swift in its operations. He was different, quite ludicrously provincial. One couldn't imagine the awful blunders he must have made and the ridiculous, simple questions by which he had managed to pilot himself about. Priscilla Jane felt the same sudden concern for him that she would have felt for a stray calf loose on State Street.

He wanted to buy a sweater.

"To buy one?" the lady at the desk had just repeated in surprise. "But we don't sell them here. We just sell the yarn to make them."

"Oh, do you?" said Priscilla Jane's soldier blankly.

And he stood there as if the Lake Michigan wind had slapped him again in the face.

"That's too bad," the lady murmured

uneasily. "You—you wanted one, didn't you?"

"It gets so cold out at camp," the boy explained. He was not accustomed to the cold September chill from the lake. "And they told me that I could buy one down here—that I could buy one down here. I've got enough money to pay for it."

"Isn't there some one who would knit it for you if you bought the yarn? Somebody back home? Haven't you a mother or a grandmother or a sister?"

The boy squirmed and cut her short.

"No, there's no one back home could do anything for me," he declared with a finality that closed that channel.

"Well, wait a minute. I'll see——"

She went across the room to consult with some one, but came back discouragingly.

"I'm just as sorry as I can be. But those are the rules. If you only knew some one who could knit one for you!"

He shook his head again, turning to go. And it was then that Priscilla Jane, who had stood by the desk and overheard the conversation, grew desperate. Mother was over at the counter matching shades of khaki. If Priscilla Jane slipped over to consult with her, the soldier would escape. She underwent an agonized moment of indecision. He was walking toward the door.

"Wait!" cried Priscilla Jane. "I'll make you one."

Dan Hubbard turned and glanced down quickly at the little girl whose

head came barely to the top of the counter, and it was suddenly as if two children stood face to face, regarding each other.

"Why haven't you any one at home who could do anything for you?" Priscilla Jane queried, going immediately to the crux of the situation. "Haven't you any mother? Or any family? Or any home?"

The tragedy of it grew upon Priscilla Jane as she talked. But one child had suddenly grown wary. By the look on his face, one could see that the questions had gone home and stung, but he was not going to be forced into any admissions.

"Oh, wait!" pleaded Priscilla Jane. "Please wait! I won't ask any more questions, truly. And I do want to knit you a sweater."

"Why, you can't knit, can you?" he asked incredulously, halting again. "You're too little."

"I can learn," Priscilla Jane declared stoutly. "Wait a moment. I'll ask mother if I can't."

And thus it came about that when they all left the Red Cross rooms together, Dan Hubbard's camp address was safe in Priscilla Jane's pocket, and the promise of an early sweater was already warming his heart and, in anticipation, even the marrow of his smallest vertebrae, which had stood in danger of becoming permanently congealed. Thus it was, also, that the mystery of the homeless soldier became the absorbing interest in Priscilla Jane's long list of wonders.

"Why," she questioned her father periodically, "do you suppose there was no one at home to knit this for him, father?"

"Oh, he may have run away," father conjectured cheerfully over his pink sheet. "Never can tell about these young fellows. May have run away and enlisted."

"Oh, dear!" mourned Priscilla Jane,

partly because she had just dropped another stitch and partly from sympathy. "Wouldn't that be too bad, mother? If he had run away, I mean. Father, why would he have run away?"

But father was deep in the prospect of the world series.

The sweater, when it was completed, was generously conceded to be Priscilla Jane's. Very true, mother had set it up and taken herself the responsibility of the "knit two, purl two" stage before she turned it over to her aspiring daughter for the plain knitting of the front. She also did things mysterious with her needles in the way of casting on and off, which eventually left a hole that proved to be the garment's neck; but Priscilla Jane traveled most of the way down the back, even purling by this time the band at the bottom, and she sewed it up the sides to make two armholes for Dan Hubbard's arms.

It was done! Priscilla Jane spread it out smoothly on her bed and patted it and stroked it and loved it as she would a furry kitten. It seemed altogether miraculous that she had made such a beautiful, beautiful thing all by herself, and the thought of the comfort it would bring to the shivering lad for whom she had knit it warmed her inmost soul.

Father tolerantly agreed to drive out to Dan's camp, that his insistent daughter might deliver her gift in person, and the picture of the slim khaki figure, with the new sweater hugged in his arms, standing against the background of flickering camp lights and shadowy tents, was one that clung in the memory. Priscilla Jane felt as if she had given a hungry waif of a dog a bone. There was the same look of gratitude in Dan Hubbard's eyes as he thanked them all repeatedly with incoherent, boyish outbursts of feeling. Indeed, Priscilla Jane's father and mother found it a trifle embarrassing to be greeted so effusively. An onlooker



"Haven't you any mother? Or any family? Or any home?" The tragedy of it grew upon Priscilla Jane as she talked.

would have thought them Dan Hubbard's closest friends.

But Priscilla Jane was fired by this attention to further effort. Dan told them, in fact, that they were the only friends who had come to see him at camp, and Priscilla Jane felt the responsibility of the honor. Seemingly,

for some curious reason, there was no one who was doing anything for this soldier boy but herself. He was quite destitute of friends or relatives, family or home. Upon her shoulders, therefore, fell the burden of providing a proper outfit for him.

"Haven't you any scarf?" she ques-

tioned him solicitously. "Or any socks or wristlets? Well, then, I'm going to make the whole outfit for you. Can't I, mother?"

And, mother consenting, they took his new address—for his company was to be moved in a few days to a Southern training camp—and Priscilla Jane promised to write to him often and to send him his newly completed articles as fast as she could knit them.

Their correspondence flourished all

the fall. Priscilla Jane wrote him funny little-girl letters of her school happenings and her friends and her sick goldfish, and the awful, terrible, horrible time she was having with the heel of his first sock, which, together with its twin, she eventually did manage to toe off in regulation manner and which was sent, wrapped in tissue paper, to Dan with a card bearing the inscription: "From your loving friend, Priscilla Jane."

And Dan wrote letters of camp life, letters very poorly written, to tell the truth, bearing the earmarks of country-school training, beginning stiffly:

DEAR FRIEND: I have time to pen you a few lines before mess.

and in places very ungrammatically constructed and quite gravely misspelled. They told of the daily drilling, of the horses—Dan was in the cavalry now—of the sham battles, of the target practice. He seemed to like the target

practice best of all, only he always spelled it "targit," very greatly to Priscilla Jane's distress. Yet she hesitated to correct him, fearing to hurt his feelings. And afterward she was so glad she had not, for a letter came bearing the splendid news that Dan had received his honors as a sharpshooter and was to be allowed first choice of any horse in the troop. How overjoyed his loving friend, Priscilla Jane, was at this news! And how ashamed she would have been—she told father—if she had corrected the



"Good land!" exclaimed Aunt Prissy. "Have I done any knitting! Humph!"

mere spelling of a real sharpshooter in the U. S. army!

Yet all these weeks there appeared not a word of any life other than that of camp, and if Priscilla Jane had hoped to solve the mystery of her soldier boy by his correspondence, she was disappointed—until Thanksgiving time.

"You can write me at Scoville over Thanksgiving if you want to," she informed her correspondent naïvely. "I'm going down to eat turkey with my Great-aunt Priscilla Jane. Only we always call her Aunt Prissy to tell her apart from me."

Dan Hubbard wrote immediately to Scoville to his loving friend, care of Mrs. Priscilla Jane Hinkley, and the letter was a surprise and a shock to the little visitor for whom it was waiting when she arrived. Dan Hubbard was in great distress.

"Please don't tell any one in Scoville about me at all or even mention my name," he wrote Priscilla Jane in a hurried scrawl. "My folks live there! Father wouldn't let me enlist, so I run away. He's awful set against the war, and if he knew I was here, I don't know what he'd do. Every one in town knows me, so don't say anything, even to Aunt Prissy."

Then there was a short postscript:

"But if you should see mother alone, you could give her my love and tell her I'm all right and that I'm a sharpshooter now. She'd like to know."

"What was your mail?" Aunt Prissy asked encouragingly, as Priscilla Jane folded her letter in considerable agitation and put it back in its envelope. "Looked like it was a letter from a soldier. Was it?"

Aunt Prissy had a way, much like Priscilla Jane's own, of going right to the point.

"It was from a soldier that I've been knitting an outfit for," replied Priscilla Jane, very stiffly. "I've made him a

sweater and a pair of socks already. Have you done any knitting, Aunt Prissy?"

"Good land!" exclaimed Aunt Prissy. "Have I done any knitting! Humph!"

For Mrs. Hinkley was president of the Scoville Red Cross Unit. What a question for her to be asked, indeed! She even knit in prayer meeting!

"Have many Scoville boys gone to war?" continued Priscilla Jane primly.

At least they were talking away from the subject of her letter.

"There was so many that there wa'n't no draft in Scoville. Seemed like every boy in town was enlistin', there fer a while. An' what ones wa'n't allowed to enlist run away an' done it anyhow, so it all amounted to the same thing."

"Why weren't they allowed to?" asked Priscilla Jane.

"Oh, some of 'em couldn't pass, you know. There was Roy Hagerton, who's always had kind of an eczema since he was a baby. They rejected him on account of a dry skin. So Roy comes home an' rubs olive oil on his face an' goes over to Cliftonville an' gets in slick as can be. An' there was Dan Hubbard——"

"Where does he live?" Priscilla Jane asked, interrupting again, her heart pounding.

"Down at the end of the road there in the white house," Aunt Jane replied, pointing through the window. "Poor Mis' Hubbard! She's ben so cut up ever sence he went, an' that old chump of an Ezra—we'd all like to wring his neck fer him! That's Dan's father, Ezra Hubbard. He's ben kinda pro-German all along—jest fer the sake of argument, I think sometimes—an' dead set agin' Dan's goin'. So finally the boy run away. Poor Dan! An' he wa'n't of age, neither. He's only twenty, come Christmas."

Aunt Prissy bustled out into the kitchen and enveloped herself in a huge gingham apron preparatory to peeling

apples for supper, Priscilla Jane following eagerly.

"Let me help! Can't I? But what did Dan's father do, Aunt Prissy?"

"You can set here an' core 'em if you want to. I'll do the peelin' myself. You'd most likely do it too thick. There's an apron behind the door in the pantry. Well, it kinda runs in Ezra's family, that cantankerous streak," Aunt Prissy continued, examining a Wealthy windfall critically before peeling it. "Yes, it seems kinda to run in the Hubbard menfolks. Ezra's father, old William Hubbard, acted just so during the Civil War. There was a boy, Sam, just about the age Dan is now. He used to beau me round, Sam Hubbard did. Well, he was a-hankerin' fer months to enlist, an' old William Hubbard kep' a-settin' his foot down; so finally Sam, he couldn't stand it no longer an' he run off an' enlisted. Well, William Hubbard was so mad he vummed an' vowed that if Sam ever come back, dead or alive, he shouldn't set foot in the house. An' he kep' his word."

"Why? Did Sam come back?" demanded Priscilla Jane, her eyes big.

"He come back in his coffin," snapped Aunt Prissy grimly. "An' that old reprobate of a William Hubbard wouldn't let the body of his own son into the house!"

"Why, Aunt Prissy!"

"No, sir! So they set the coffin out in the orchard under the trees. It was cherry-blossom time, I recollect, an' the orchard was all pink an' white. An' there set the coffin, with a big flag on it, fer two days an' nights, an' the neighbors a-settin' up with him right out in the open. An' 'twas out there they had the funeral, too. My land! Such a sermon as Elder Secler preached that day! 'Twas soul-stirrin', I tell you! 'Twas enough to make any man squirm but William Hubbard. But he never give in. He was an awful set

man with his family. An' the very next week Ezra was born an' poor Mis' Hubbard died. She'd stood too much, I guess. An' so William Hubbard raised up Ezra to think just like he did. He's awful like his father, Ezra is, an' when it come his turn, with his son a-goin' to war, he started in just like his father had before him. Poor Dan! Well, if he gets killed in France, there won't be no coffin, anyhow, a-settin' out in the orchard under the trees."

The story made a deep impression upon Priscilla Jane. Her big eyes filled with tears as she watched Aunt Prissy's face, and one or two rolled down for Dan Hubbard into the pan of Wealthy apples. But if Aunt Prissy saw them, she took no notice. Instead, she wiped her own eyes with the corner of her apron and pretended that she was rubbing a spot that itched on her cheek.

"I'd like to see Ezra Hubbard, though," said Priscilla Jane suddenly.

"Well, you're apt to find him a real pleasant-spoken man," conceded Aunt Prissy. "It's only when he gets his back up, like his father used to, that he makes a fool of himself. He's a pleasant-spoken man. You're very apt to like him, an' he's real fond of little girls."

"Is he?" asked Priscilla Jane eagerly.

"We can run over there to-night," Aunt Prissy offered cheerfully. "I want to see Mis' Hubbard, anyhow, about some Red Cross work."

It turned out that Aunt Prissy's prediction was quite correct, for Mr. Hubbard and Priscilla Jane made out famously together. She was very, very nice to him, was Priscilla Jane, all the instincts of her feminine nature asserting themselves to make herself liked. She sat on his lap when he asked her to, and told him about her pets at home and about how she was knitting for the Red Cross—

"Pshaw! You can't knit, now, a little thing like you?" Mr. Hubbard denied disdainfully.



Ezra Hubbard filled his pipe very carefully, punched down the tobacco with his thumb—and sat there holding it between his hands.

"Yes, I can," insisted Priscilla Jane, nodding her head violently. "I'll bring it over and show you, Mr. Hubbard, and then you'll believe me, I guess."

"Well, sir, I guess that's what you'll have to do," said Mr. Hubbard, wagging his own head. "Don't look to me like you was a knitter."

"Oh, and I'll bring over the letters I've had from the soldier I've been knitting for!" cried Priscilla Jane, suddenly inspired. "Shall I do that, too, Mr. Hubbard? And read them to you?"

"Sure," agreed Mr. Hubbard.

He cast one eye cautiously over at the two women who were chatting near the stove and was glad that they were not listening, but who would refuse anything to this chubby little girl, who sat on his lap and looked at him so winningly out of her big, dark, deep eyes?

Priscilla Jane kept her word. The very next afternoon, she took her knitting over to show Mr. Hubbard, and when they were seated with their chairs pulled together near the big base burner

in the sitting room, conveniently out of hearing from Mrs. Hubbard, who was making her Thanksgiving pies in the kitchen, Priscilla Jane also produced a packet of letters from the depths of her voluminous knitting bag and importantly pulled off the rubber that bound them together.

Before she started to read, Priscilla Jane told about meeting her soldier boy down at the Red Cross rooms, where he was trying unsuccessfully to buy a sweater. And she spared no detail. She made him cold and lonesome and forlorn, with a suggestion of tears in her voice that was absolutely sincere, her eyes soft with feeling. And she told about taking the sweater to him out at camp, and how gloomy it was out there with the big lights flickering and throwing crooked shadows against the murky tents.

And then she started in to read the letters, while Ezra Hubbard filled his pipe very carefully, punched down the tobacco with his thumb—and sat there holding it between his hands.

She read about the cavalry practice and the target practice. This lad told how he had been taught to shoot by his father when they had used to go rabbit hunting together winter times, and how it certainly served him in good stead now. He was making a fine record at target practice, he wrote.

And so she came to the letter in which he told how he had been made a sharpshooter and given the honor of choosing the best horse in the troop for his own use.

Ezra Hubbard straightened himself suddenly, seemed to remember his pipe—which he now proceeded to light—and, rising, walked over to the window, where he stood with his back to Priscilla Jane.

Suddenly he spoke, sharply.

"Ma!" he called to Mrs. Hubbard in the kitchen. "Come in here a minute."

Mrs. Hubbard came to the doorway.

"What d'you want, Ezra? I'm right in the middle of my pies."

Mrs. Hubbard was a quiet little woman, very composed, but Ezra's answer seemed to shake her through and through.

"Ma," said Ezra Hubbard, "Dan's been made a sharpshooter an' given first choice of any horse in his troop. I want you should make one of them pies fer him, an' we'll send him a box to camp fer Thanksgiving."

But Mrs. Hubbard, gone suddenly very white, was not the only one to give a cry of surprise.

"How did you know it was Dan?" cried Priscilla Jane, dumfounded.

"I see his handwritin' on the envelopes," replied Ezra Hubbard, and, putting on his hat, went outdoors, leaving his wife and Priscilla Jane to mutual rejoicing and the delight of Dan's camp letters, which had to be read all over again while Mrs. Hubbard finished her pies.

Only Aunt Prissy, when she heard the great news, pretended to be unmoved by it.

"But, Aunt Prissy, he's fixing the most wonderful box to send to Dan. And he's going to buy him a wrist watch and a fountain pen—"

"I'm not surprised," sniffed Aunt Prissy, "not the least bit in the world. Like as not he's ben a-settin' there all fall a-wishin' fer a gracefull chance to give in. That's a man fer ye."

"I must write and tell father!" rhapsodied Priscilla Jane. "Oh, Aunt Prissy, can't you and I make him some cookies to put in the box?"

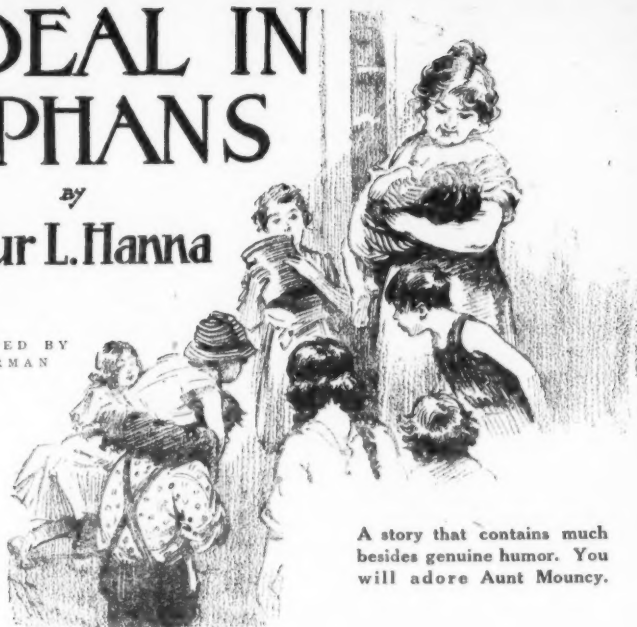
"Why, I shouldn't wonder. He always liked those raisin-an'-nut cookies awful well. An' they'll keep—till the boys get a-hold of 'em."

"Oh, and I know how we'll mark them. Let's put in a card and write on it: 'From your loving friends, Aunt Prissy and Priscilla Jane.'"

A DEAL IN ORPHANS

By
Arthur L. Hanna

ILLUSTRATED BY
E. A. FURMAN



A story that contains much besides genuine humor. You will adore Aunt Mouncy.

AUNT MOUNCY WALTERS drew her shiny arms out of the suds and placed them akimbo, with one capable fist on each hip.

"You Chassie!" she shrilled to a fat morsel of humanity in one corner of the littered floor. "Take that thing out o' yer mouth! Land alive! Ain't there enough, what with prallasis an' all stalkin' around lyin' in wait fer young uns, 'tout you eatin' sech things? Jinny Emmons, take that black spider out o' Chassie Sibbs' mouth."

Virginny rose with juvenile dignity from her game of jackstones with Cull Tommins and went to the rescue of the spider and the salvation of Chassie.

But, like many another sinner, Chassie Sibbs did not wish to be saved, and set afoot a commotion which, anywhere but in Aunt Mouncy's isolated habitation, would have seemed appalling.

"Hi-i-i-i!" she screamed, with lungs

out of all proportion to her ensemble. "Give me 'pider! Me want 'pider. My 'pider!"

Aunt Mouncy's face wrinkled into red lines of vexation and compassion. Hastily swabbing her arms with her apron, she swooped down on the two children, stamped the lingering remnants of life out of the unhappy insect, and gathered Chassie to her ample bosom.

"Hush, honey, hush!" she crooned. "Auntie'll git you a cooky, yes, she will. Cookies's better 'n slaughty spiders any day. Jinny, fetch the jar, an' see how many's left."

This command not only set Virginny's spindle legs in frantic motion, but brought an overwhelming irruption of humanity upon the rash proponent of the relief expedition. From every corner of the room and from three doorways they descended upon her. Lastly,

through an open window, a ragged bundle hurtled down upon her shoulders and fell in a heap to the floor.

"You Sam Terribone!" shouted Aunt Mouncey, shaking the invader till he threatened to disintegrate. "Whadd'ye mean, swarmin' down my back like that? I'll teach ye, ye young rascal!"

Samuel, giggling and none the worse for the agitation of his person, squatted on the floor and through tangled hair eyed Virginny approaching with the jar.

"Now," said Aunt Mouncey, inspecting the contents, "seven white cookies an' one ginger—half a cooky apiece, an' we'll save the ginger for the kid that behaves bes' till dinner time."

When the necessary bisections had been made by means of a pair of shears and a shrewd blue eye, an abnormal peace settled over the room for the space of two minutes. Aunt Mouncey returned to her tub.

"Used to tell me," she soliloquized, "that food was et to sustain the body. But seems to me it's main good is to drown the noise in kids—an' men critters."

The last three words were an afterthought. Aunt Mouncey had experienced the joys and sorrows of connubial life with one Japhet Walters, who had recently gone to glory. Some said she had loved him to death, whatever that may mean. Others hinted broadly that he had loved himself to death over a procession of black bottles. At any rate, he was gone.

For a time Aunt Mouncey had been inconsolable. Loving somebody was as the breath of life to her, and no "chick nor child" had she to remind her of the departed one and to soak up the overflow of her affectionate soul. No amount of hard work could ease her gnawing loneliness, and the sudden taking off of Aunt Mouncey's nearest neighbor, the mother of little Virginny Emmons, had been a godsend; for not only

Virginny, but her two brothers, her juniors by thirteen and twenty-five months respectively, had strayed across the open lots to her door and taken up their abode there without a syllable of explanation. If the waifs had ever had a father, they didn't know it, and the busy authorities who had buried the cast-off wreck of a mother had never asked what had become of them.

Aunt Mouncey had gathered them into her sturdy arms and kissed them—an unusual, but rather delightful, experience to them—and had fed them until they fell asleep.

But that had been only a nucleus. Whence had come the line of youngsters that followed the three pioneers into the Walters domicile and settled there was a mystery never cleared up. If the citizens of Belton had a legitimate claim to any of them, they were strangely indifferent in the matter. No searching parties had ever been sent out.

Some of the youngsters were known not to be Belton products. Cull Tommins, for instance, with his brilliant locks, and Sam Terribone, shreddy as to raiment and hair, had been found by Virginny on the fair grounds after the circus had departed, two months before. They had been weeping with hunger and misery, and naturally enough she had taken them home to Aunt Mouncey.

As little, or less, was known about Lizbin, a shadowy wisp of a girl, bluish from head to foot; and about Turbie Joy, Philly O'Falle, Fid Smith, and many others of the outcasts who found sustenance and protection with Aunt Mouncey Walters.

At first, small attention was paid to the growing colony, though some of the residents of that poverty-stricken end of the city were vocal in their speculations as to how their neighbor contrived to feed her charges.

It was mysterious. True, Aunt

Mouncey owned her house and so had no rent to pay, and her taxes were negligible. Moreover, she began work at five o'clock, sometimes at four, in the morning, and was often bending over her tub or ironing board till nine at night. Thus she rarely closed a week with less than fifteen dollars to her credit, for the quality of her work was good, and her patrons were both prompt and liberal. But fourteen digestive apparatuses between two and ten years of age can make serious inroads on fifteen dollars in the course of a week, and much depends on how the matter is managed.

"No meat ner flum-diddles fer my kiddies!" Aunt Mouncey would say. "No slops ner fancyin's, neither! Rice an' oats an' stale bread an' a swaller o' milk an' a 'tater now an' then—their's the things to raise little cattle like them on."

Fifty cents per child per week will go a long way in the direction outlined by this astute manager. The cooky jar was almost the only luxury. Like the wise old Hibernian, Aunt Mouncey knew that "a luxury or two is a necessity." And cookies were easy; she could stir up a batch, toss them into her always raging oven in relays, drag them out again, and store them in the gaping jars—all with scarcely an interruption to her routine. A gross of cookies stopped a gap, even in those appetites.

Clothing the youngsters was the least of her worries. They wore out few clothes for the elementary reason that they wore few. Moreover, the eight or nine women for whom Aunt Mouncey labored were generous in the matter of "cast-offs," and—except in the case of an expert like Sam Terribone, who could turn a presentable garment into a tatter in one handspring—it was not impossible to keep the wriggling bodies decorously covered.

But, alas, it was through the matter of clothing her orphans that Aunt

Mouncey came to grief—that and her refusal to draw the color line in her benefactions.

Mrs. LeMorne Grayling had just turned over to her a large roll of discarded garments and was about to ascend her staircase.

"By the way," she asked idly, "what do you do with all this trash?"

"Do with it?" echoed Aunt Mouncey. "You jes' oughter see my young uns! This'll last 'em about a week."

"Young ones? But I thought you had no children, Aunt Mouncey."

"On'y fourteen of 'em," said the latter with cheerful grimness. "Oh, I didn't bear an' suckle 'em, Mis' Grayling, but I has to feed an' tog 'em same's if they's mine an' Japhet's." And she proceeded to enter an explanation.

Mrs. Grayling was aghast.

"But you ought not to take such a burden on yourself," she protested. "You ought to turn them over to the county."

"Me turn 'em over to the county!" blazed Aunt Mouncey, her blue eyes snapping. "I got a picture o' me doin' that! Send them little critters to the county home! I guess yes!"

Mrs. Grayling laughed indulgently.

"I shall have to come out and see your family," she said.

And she came. It was a grilling day in August when she arrived. An even dozen of the foundlings were scattered about the floor, as negligent in attitude as in attire. Sam and Cull were rolling in the sand outside, like the little razorbacks they were, and Fid Smith was asleep, with his head on the doorstep.

Aunt Mouncey raised one elbow to polish her dripping brow and allowed her eyes to wander to the door. There they clung in magnetized amaze, while the soap slipped from her hands and splashed into the tub. In the doorway stood the smallest individual of African descent that she had ever beheld.

"Where'd you come from?" she ejaculated. "I didn't know they made niggers as little as you."

The newcomer rolled his eyes in the extraordinary manner of his race and pushed a scrap of a felt hat farther back on his crinkly bullet of a head.

"I's hongry!" he confided.

"I s'pose so," agreed Aunt Mouncey. "But yer too dirty to feed—I s'pose it's dirt. Body can't tell on that color o' skin. Besides, if I git out any vittles, whut'll I do with all this gang?"

The visitor put one black twig of a finger into his mouth and seemed on the point of dissolution into tears.

"Here, here, here!" cried Aunt Mouncey. "None o' that!"

She disappeared into her larder for a brief space, came out with something under her apron, and shoosed the little African ahead of her into the upper regions. All the Caucasian eyes followed wistfully, but the Caucasian legs knew better than to do likewise.

"Whut's yer name?" demanded Aunt Mouncey.

"Bullets," answered the boy, rolling his eyes again at sight of the lump of bread and molasses that she produced.

"Bullets!" said Aunt Mouncey. "Good land! I thought I had all the heathen names they was. Well, you Bullets, you eat this here bread an' surrup, an' when you git done, come down them stairs to me. Und'stand?"

"Yas'm," choked Bullets over his first mouthful.

Aunt Mouncey looked doubtfully at him and, sighing, went back to her work.

"Whut next?" she asked patiently, addressing fate. "I ain't never contracted fer black orphans, have I?"

But she took out an empty tub, poured in a bucketful of water, put soap and a towel beside it, and waited. Presently Bullets appeared, molasses streaked across his ebony visage and resting in globules on his shirt.

"Take off yer duds," commanded Aunt Mouncey.

"Huh?" The eyes revolved more wildly than ever.

"Shed 'em!" she said succinctly. Then, perceiving that she was quite

uncomprehended, "Here, I'll help you, if y'are a coon!"

It was the work of only a moment. But when Bullets, standing in the tub of lukewarm water, saw his apparel disappear into the devouring element under the wash boiler, two black fists



"I'se hongry!" he confided.

went to his eyes and his lamentations arose.

And it was at that auspicious moment that Mrs. LeMorne Grayling entered on her promised visit.

"But, my dear! Fourteen white children and one negro!"

"That was what I counted," nodded Mrs. Grayling.

Mrs. Spenser raised languid hands of dismay.

"A very breeding place of contagion I should think," she said.

"Well, I must say she keeps them pretty clean, and the house, too. You'd be surprised."

"But how does she feed them all?" It was an undeniably pretty, alert young woman—Miss Fair—who asked this.

Mrs. Grayling explained the matter as best she could.

"What does she do it for?" asked Mrs. Spenser. "Why should she?"

"She seems to like it."

"But that's impossible—impossible!" exclaimed another matron. "She must be unbalanced."

"I'm not so sure of that," said Miss Fair, her eyes shining. "I think it's rather beautiful."

Several of the other women laughed softly.

"You're very young, my dear," said one.

The girl's face tingled.

"I really should like to know Aunt Mouncey!" she declared.

"If she wanted babies of her own," said one quiet little body, "and never had them, I suppose that accounts for it."

"Something must be done about this!" exclaimed Mrs. Forbes, a forceful-looking woman. "Those children ought to be taken over by the county. Heaven knows what might happen there, the way things are now!"

This seemed to be the consensus of

opinion of the informal gathering. There were two notes of doubt—from Miss Fair and the woman who had understood the craving of Aunt Mouncey's heart—but, knowing as little as they did of the case, they felt hardly justified in open opposition. Before invoking official action, it was suggested that a personal interview with Aunt Mouncey might result in a peaceful adjustment of the matter.

"I have strong doubts of that," said Mrs. Grayling, in smiling recollection of a blazing blue eye, but she consented to share with Mrs. Forbes the delicate mission.

Now, there was nothing "slow" about Aunt Mouncey, and when she saw the deputation approaching one steaming afternoon, she had a fairly clear conception of what lay before her. Therefore, she herded her charges through the rear exit into the yard, enjoined a reasonable degree of good conduct on them, bolted the door, and went to welcome her visitors.

"How de do?" she said, with just a touch of jauntiness, polishing off two chairs with her apron. "Set down, won't you?"

"How do you do, Aunt Mouncey?" returned Mrs. Grayling graciously. "This is my friend, Mrs. Forbes."

The latter lady, who affected a lorgnette, was using that instrument in a rapid and thorough inspection of the apartment. Aunt Mouncey eyed her ominously.

"Where are your little friends today?" asked Mrs. Grayling, to create a diversion. "All well?"

"All in prime health," said Aunt Mouncey with emphasis. "Jest turned 'em out to pasture. Fresh air's good fer 'em even if they can't take it in ottamobeels."

There was something about this rejoinder that caused Mrs. Forbes to turn her optical batteries on her hostess with renewed interest. As eye met eye,

'twas battle to the death, as the poet has it.

"Are these quarters not somewhat—ah—restricted for so many children?" demanded Mrs. Forbes.

"Sure!" returned the other cheerfully, though her eyes glittered. "But I ain't heard no complaints. These kids wasn't raised to expect a nurs'ry an' a bedroom an' 'a boodwore an' a bath all to 'emselfes. I s'pose they's ign'rant, but they likes this better than sleepin' under coal cars an' 'longside o' slop buckets."

Mrs. Forbes regarded her stonily.

"But, Aunt Mouncey," interposed the milder Mrs. Grayling, "wouldn't they be much happier in some good institution?"

"S'pose we call 'em in an' ask 'em."

"No, no, no!" said Mrs. Grayling hastily. "Let's settle this without any interruption."

"Settle what?" demanded Aunt Mouncey sharply.

"I can't believe," remarked Mrs. Forbes, "that you are able to feed all these children properly."

"That's prob'ly," said Aunt Mouncey calmly, "because you don't know nothin' 'bout proper feedin'."

Mrs. Forbes grew rigid, while her friend choked back a desperate desire to laugh. Mrs. Forbes was chairman of the committee on "Food Conservation," and had recently read a paper on "Approved Methods of Preparing Nutrition for Infants and Adolescents" before the club. Mrs. Grayling felt it incumbent on her to say mildly:

"Really, Aunt Mouncey, you mustn't insult ladies who come here with good intentions."

"Then let ladies be extra keerful whut they says to me. I've always liked you, Mis' Grayling, not becuz ye give me washin'—land knows I kin git enough o' that!—but ye've treated me white an' you don't carry a stick with a

squint piece on the end of it!" she added viciously.

"What is this woman talking about?" asked Mrs. Forbes, appealing to her friend, but the latter would not trust herself to answer.

"I fear," pursued the forceful lady, "these can hardly be called sanitary surroundings for such an aggregation of children."

Aunt Mouncey rose and planted her fists on her hips. She looked dangerous.

"I don't un'dstand all yer big words," she said. "D'ye mean we're buggy—or full o' fleas?"

"Mercy!" ejaculated Mrs. Forbes, also rising. "What a creature! I see clearly, Mrs. Grayling, that we shall have to turn this case over to the proper authorities. The sooner the children are taken from such evil surroundings, the better."

Aunt Mouncey strode to the front door and surveyed the roadway.

"The goin's purty good," she announced in a voice that seemed to hold possibilities, "an' I see yer shoffur git'in' uneasy. Good day, ma'am!"

Mrs. Forbes swept past without word or glance, but Mrs. Grayling hesitated long enough to murmur:

"Now, now, *please*, Aunt Mouncey, try to be reasonable."

The other disdained to reply, but kept a threatening eye on the more aggressive lady till they were outside. Then she closed the door, threw her apron over her head, and fell to subdued weeping.

"The cards is stacked agin' me, as Japhet useter say," she sobbed. "Pore little devils!"

The next morning an autotruck rolled up to Aunt Mouncey's little house and two officials, accompanied by a policeman, alighted and entered. They were the superintendent of the almshouse and the clerk of the board of charities. The fifteen "orphants" were lined up, counted, and put through the third de-



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gree as to their antecedents. When Aunt Mouncey had admitted that they were not "blood relations" of hers and that she had no legal claim to them, they were hustled aboard the truck and trundled away to a more ordered existence.

"It's about Aunt Mouncey," said Miss Fair, as she seated herself in Mrs. Grayling's drawing-room and twirled her sunshade with a little agitation. Her comely face was clouded with anxiety.

"What about Aunt Mouncey?" asked the older woman with quick misgiving. "Penelope, she is seriously ill. I sent

Doctor Fiske out to see her, and he says—Penelope, he says she is in a decline, grieving herself to death over something."

"Aunt Mouncey! In a decline!" gasped the other lady. "The thing's absurd! There isn't a healthier woman in ten States!"

Miss Fair said nothing.

"I knew she hadn't been doing any washing for me for several weeks," went on Mrs. Grayling, "but I thought she was sulking. Come, Helena, we'll go and see her."

They found Aunt Mouncey propped up in bed—alone for the moment, though a neighbor was administering to

her needs with more or less regularity. The first sight of her gave Mrs. Grayling a shock. She seemed to have lost fifty pounds, her face was white and haggard, and, worst of all to one who knew her, the glitter of that capable blue eye was in eclipse. The spirit had gone out of her.

"What does this mean, Aunt Mouncey?" demanded Mrs. Grayling. "You sick in bed and never let me know?"

The other woman smiled wanly. If she felt resentment, she uttered no reproach.

"Wasn't nothin' you could do, I guess," she said dully. "I'm jes' sort o' tired o' things."

"But how long have you been like this?" asked Mrs. Grayling, taking a listless hand in hers.

"Ever since—— Oh, I dunno. I stopped countin' days."

"Aunt Mouncey," said Miss Fair impulsively, "if we can set you on your feet again, will you go to a quiet place I know of and rest up—take it easy for a month or two—eat what you are told to eat, sleep when you are told to, and really try to get well?"

The invalid turned a mild eye on the young woman.

"Where 'bouts?" she asked.

"It's on a beautiful hill just outside of Philadelphia. I know the people well—an old physician and his wife, with half a dozen kind nurses. Several of my friends have found new health there."

"S'pose a body don't want no new health."

"Aunt, Mouncey!" exclaimed Mrs. Grayling. "You mustn't speak like that."

A passing gleam lighted the sick woman's eye.

"Might be wicked for you," she said. "But whut've I got to live fer?"

"Come, come, Aunt Mouncey,"

wheedled the girl. "This is a favor to me, you know. Will you go?"

The other pondered the question.

"Seein' it's you, Miss Fair—yes, I'll go."

But she was not enthusiastic about it.

Six weeks later, when the trees were robing themselves in gorgeous draperies, Mrs. Grayling ran up the steps to Miss Fair's apartment and rang impatiently.

"My dear, my dear!" she exclaimed, as nearly out of breath as she ever allowed herself to be. "Have you heard from Aunt Mouncey lately?"

"Yes," said Miss Fair, pushing her friend gently into a chair. "What's the trouble? I heard a few days ago."

"You did! Was she doing well?"

"Splendidly—though I could hardly read the letter." Miss Fair laughed at the recollection. "She talks of coming home."

"Talks of coming home! Helena Fair, was the letter rational?"

"Why, it seemed rational enough, though, as I say, I could hardly—Wait a moment and I'll get it."

"No, no!" rejoined Mrs. Grayling. "Read this, instead."

She forced a sorry-looking missive into the girl's hands. Miss Fair read:

DEAR MRS. GRAYLING: i am comming home wensdy by the morning trane. i am quit well again and will be glad to get back to work again. i am bringing 26 orfuns with me. Respectfully MRS. MOUNCEY WALTERS.

"Bringing *what*?" asked Miss Fair, aghast.

"Twenty-six orphans—twenty-six orphans!" cried Mrs. Grayling hysterically. "Helena, what on earth shall we do?"

"Mrs. Forbes will see that they are sent back," said Miss Fair.

"Of course they can be sent back, but—we'll have Aunt Mouncey dying on our hands again. If Ethelinda Forbes

gets wind of this!" She paused tragically.

"We can't head Aunt Mouncy off, I suppose?"

"Hardly. That wretched train will be in in less than an hour."

"Well, my dear Penelope," said the other energetically, "it's clearly up to us. We'll meet that train, get Aunt Mouncy—and anybody that's with her—home as quietly as we can, and then try to talk reason to her."

It was a triumphant homecoming for Aunt Mouncy. At the head of the procession as it left the cars was that lady herself, rosy, buxom, bouncing, masterful as in days of old, and behind her a trailing aggregation of juvenility such as Belton had never seen before. There were only twenty-six of them, but their variety and activity gave the impression of at least twoscore. Besides Americans, Irish, Swedes, Italians, "hunkies," and "Yiddishers," there were two little maidens of color and an almond-eyed delegate from Chinatown.

"Well, here I be!" cried Aunt Mouncy happily, spying Mrs. Grayling's car and making a bee line for it.

"Yes," said that lady faintly, "yes. Here you are. But all these—what are you going to do with them?"

"Take 'em home an' feed 'em. My, it's good to be in Belton ag'in!"

Mrs. Grayling felt the inadequacy of words, but Miss Fair said smilingly;

"I'm sorry this car won't hold all your little friends. We'll trail along behind you, Aunt Mouncy, and see that you get home safely."

"I never before," murmured Mrs. Grayling, "understood that word 'nerve.'"

"But, Aunt Mouncy, you must see the impossibility of such a thing," said the same lady a half hour later. "Why, the laws don't allow this wholesale transportation of paupers from one town to another."

The "paupers" had been fed to the bursting point from the nearest corner grocery, and were now disporting themselves in semicivilized pastimes under their guardian's watchful eye.

"Oh, nobuddy'll stop me," said she easily. "Er if they do, I'm gonna fight. I'm tired o' people sayin' whut I kin do with my own money."

"But seriously, Aunt Mouncy," said Miss Fair, "when this is known, the children will be sent back. You can't fight the law, you know."

The light died from Aunt Mouncy's eyes. Most of these women she did not trust, but Miss Fair, she knew, was her friend.

"Japhet was right," she said bitterly. "The cards is stacked agin' me. Won't they let a poor widow have a kiddy er two around her without the noosance o' feedin' an' soberin' a man critter?"

Mrs. Grayling and Miss Fair swallowed their smiles with difficulty. Then the former had what seemed to be an inspiration.

"Aunt Mouncy," she said, "do you remember that large family you had here before you went away?"

"Do I remember 'em? Shall I ever fergit 'em! Jinny Emmons an' Chassie Sibbs an' Fiddie Smith an' Cull—But whut about 'em?"

"Listen, Aunt Mouncy. Some of them have already been placed in good homes and will be well cared for. That little negro boy—"

"Bullets?" demanded Aunt Mouncy.

"Yes. His parents scoured the city for him. He's with his mother now."

"H'mph!" said Aunt Mouncy. "She's welcome to him. I ain't got nothin' agin' niggers, but I wants my own shade o' flesh."

"Well," pursued Mrs. Grayling, "if you will send these children back to the city, I can arrange to bring back five or six—not more than six—of your other family to you, and see that nobody disturbs them. But you must

promise to bring no more from out of town, and if any come to you from anywhere, you must come to Miss Fair or me to see what to do about it. And you must see that your older children go to school."

"All right," said Aunt Mouncey with a sigh. "If I kin have Jinny an' her two brothers an' Chassie an' Cull an' Sam Terribone an'——"

"Hold on!" cried Mrs. Grayling. "That's six—your limit."

"An' Fiddie Smith. That's only seven. Seven ain't so many."

"All right," agreed Mrs. Grayling. "Seven—if I can find them."

"But, Penelope," said Miss Fair—silent till now—"if Ethelinda Forbes hears of this——"

"Ethelinda won't hear of it. Or if she does, leave her to me. I'll blackmail her. She's done worse things than this."

"And how," asked Miss Fair, "are we to get these children to the city?"

Aunt Mouncey became all suppliant docility.

"Let me take 'em back! Oh, Mis' Grayling, let me!"

"But what will you do with them in the city?"

"Why, take 'em back where I got 'em. I picked 'em up mos'ly around' a mission down there. I'll take 'em to the ladies that runs the mission."

"Have you got money enough?" asked Mrs. Grayling. "Well, here's ten dollars to help out. And, Aunt Mouncey, if one of those twenty-six is here tomorrow, you shall never see Virginia and Chassie as long as you live!"

The afternoon sun was slanting in through the rear door of Aunt Mouncey's dwelling when Mrs. Grayling and Miss Fair arrived the next day. Virginny Emmons stood by the table, watching Aunt Mouncey mix cookies. In one corner sat Chassie Sibbs, an Emmons boy on each side of her. Outside, Cull Tommins and Sam Terribone

were rolling a philosophical tomcat in the ash pile. Fid Smith was asleep under the steps.

"So they all got here safely?" said Mrs. Grayling, beaming about her.

"Yes, they did!" answered Aunt Mouncey, cutting out cookies and flipping them on to the pans with her old-time vigor. "Wa'n't I glad to see 'em! I'm sure much obliged to you, Mis' Grayling."

"And how did you get along with the others?" asked Miss Fair.

"They're back safe an' sound," was the answer, with just a hint of reserve.

"But what did you do with them?"

"Aunt Mouncey shot a pan of cookies into the oven.

"It's a sin an' a shame to double cross you ladies," she said, "after all ye've done—an' I didn't go to do it—at first. Ye see, I didn't rightly adopt them kids. They wa'n't waifs an' strays, so to speak—an' there's yer ten dollars, Mis' Grayling. Ye see, I didn't need it."

"What—what do you mean?" faltered Mrs. Grayling.

"They's all got homes down there," explained Aunt Mouncey. "I on'y called 'em orphans in fun. The ladies at the mission wanted to give 'em a day's out-in' in the country in charge o' somebody trustworthy, an' they asked me to do it."

"And you mean," gasped Miss Fair, "that you were going to take them back anyway?"

"Um-hm," nodded Aunt Mouncey.

The other women stared at her a moment and then dissolved in hysterical mirth. Jinny Emmons seemed to glimpse the situation.

"You won't send us away again, will you, ma'am?" she asked.

"No, Virginia," said Mrs. Grayling. "No, dear. Aunt Mouncey is a swindler and ought to go to jail, but we won't send you away. Oh, Helena, Helena! If Ethelinda Forbes ever hears of this!"

Purple *and* Gold

By Marion Short

Author of "The Road of Dreams," "Hallie Nobody," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. L. LAMBDIN

The story of Gilly, a servant girl—another unforgettable character to be placed in Miss Short's gallery of heroines.

GILLY began the day's round of duties by maneuvering a carpet sweeper deftly between the trunks and packing boxes that dotted the surface of Miss Oglethorpe's rug. Miss Oglethorpe was a burlesque actress about to take to the road. She was loud-voiced, artificially blond, and maturely fat.

"How long have you worked for Mrs. Hodfare, Gilly?" she asked, noticing enviously the red gold of the housemaid's hair and wondering if henna—just a touch—might not make her own resemble it.

The wielder of the rickety sweeper brought it to a halt, and again envy stirred within Miss Oglethorpe's bosom. Gilly, falling into an attitude of acute meditation, displayed that pliant, lithe, graceful slimness which youth alone can give and which reducing bandages may help thirty-five to approximate, but never to attain.

"I've worked here—lemme see! Er—well, ever since I was fourteen and a half and ran away from my Aunt Sallie's 'cause she got married again and he didn't like me."

"And how old are you now?"

"Funny you should ast me that," blushed Gilly, "seein' as I'm eighteen to-day!"

"Oh!" sopranoed Miss Oglethorpe with surprise. "You look such a child I never would have dreamed it. What I wanted to know for is that I was

intending to give you something for which I haven't any more use, only I thought you might be too young to wear it. But, dear me, if you're really eighteen——"

She stooped and began lifting out the contents of a large striped handbox.

"Huh?" exclaimed Gilly sturdily. Gifts so seldom came her way that she failed to recognize one even when she saw it approaching.

Miss Oglethorpe balanced on her hand a mammoth hat with a high crown of interwoven wires covered with gold lace. Two theatrical purple plumes branched out astoundingly from the purple velvet brim.

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"The plumes have been dyed twice," she acknowledged with chummy frankness, "but they're a fine quality, and if you take good care of them, they ought to last you a lifetime."

promise to bring no more from out of town, and if any come to you from anywhere, you must come to Miss Fair or me to see what to do about it. And you must see that your older children go to school."

"All right," said Aunt Mouncey with a sigh. "If I kin have Jinny an' her two brothers an' Chassie an' Cull an' Sam Terribone an'—"

"Hold on!" cried Mrs. Grayling. "That's six—your limit."

"An' Fiddie Smith. That's only seven. Seven ain't so many."

"All right," agreed Mrs. Grayling. "Seven—if I can find them."

"But, Penelope," said Miss Fair—silent till now—"if Ethelinda Forbes hears of this—"

"Ethelinda won't hear of it. Or if she does, leave her to me. I'll blackmail her. She's done worse things than this."

"And how," asked Miss Fair, "are we to get these children to the city?"

Aunt Mouncey became all suppliant docility.

"Let me take 'em back! Oh, Mis' Grayling, let me!"

"But what will you do with them in the city?"

"Why, take 'em back where I got 'em. I picked 'em up mos'ly around' a mission down there. I'll take 'em to the ladies that runs the mission."

"Have you got money enough?" asked Mrs. Grayling. "Well, here's ten dollars to help out. And, Aunt Mouncey, if one of those twenty-six is here to-morrow, you shall never see Virginia and Chassie as long as you live!"

The afternoon sun was slanting in through the rear door of Aunt Mouncey's dwelling when Mrs. Grayling and Miss Fair arrived the next day. Virginny Emmons stood by the table, watching Aunt Mouncey mix cookies. In one corner sat Chassie Sibbs, an Emmons boy on each side of her. Outside, Cull Tommins and Sam Terribone

were rolling a philosophical tomat in the ash pile. Fid Smith was asleep under the steps.

"So they all got here safely?" said Mrs. Grayling, beaming about her.

"Yes, they did!" answered Aunt Mouncey, cutting out cookies and flipping them on to the pans with her old-time vigor. "Wa'n't I glad to see 'em! I'm sure much obliged to you, Mis' Grayling."

"And how did you get along with the others?" asked Miss Fair.

"They're back safe an' sound," was the answer, with just a hint of reserve.

"But what did you do with them?"
Aunt Mouncey shot a pan of cookies into the oven.

"It's a sin an' a shame to double cross you ladies," she said, "after all ye've done—an' I didn't go to do it—at first. Ye see, I didn't rightly adopt them kids. They wa'n't waifs an' strays, so to speak—an' there's yer ten dollars, Mis' Grayling. Ye see, I didn't need it."

"What—what do you mean?" faltered Mrs. Grayling.

"They's all got homes down there," explained Aunt Mouncey. "I on'y called 'em orphans in fun. The ladies at the mission wanted to give 'em a day's out-in' in the country in charge o' somebody trustworthy, an' they asked me to do it."

"And you mean," gasped Miss Fair, "that you were going to take them back anyway?"

"Um-hm," nodded Aunt Mouncey.

The other women stared at her a moment and then dissolved in hysterical mirth. Jinny Emmons seemed to glimpse the situation.

"You won't send us away again, will you, ma'am?" she asked.

"No, Virginia," said Mrs. Grayling. "No, dear. Aunt Mouncey is a swindler and ought to go to jail, but we won't send you away. Oh, Helena, Helena! If Ethelinda Forbes ever hears of this!"

Purple *and* Gold

By Marion Short

Author of "The Road of Dreams," "Hallie Nobody," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. L. LAMBDIN

The story of Gilly, a servant girl—another unforgettable character to be placed in Miss Short's gallery of heroines.

GILLY began the day's round of duties by maneuvering a carpet sweeper deftly between the trunks and packing boxes that dotted the surface of Miss Oglethorpe's rug. Miss Oglethorpe was a burlesque actress about to take to the road. She was loud-voiced, artificially blond, and maturely fat.

"How long have you worked for Mrs. Hodfare, Gilly?" she asked, noticing enviously the red gold of the housemaid's hair and wondering if henna—just a touch—might not make her own resemble it.

The wielder of the rickety sweeper brought it to a halt, and again envy stirred within Miss Oglethorpe's bosom. Gilly, falling into an attitude of acute meditation, displayed that pliant, lithe, graceful slimness which youth alone can give and which reducing bandages may help thirty-five to approximate, but never to attain.

"I've worked here—lemme see! Er-r—well, ever since I was fourteen and a half and ran away from my Aunt Sallie's 'cause she got married again and he didn't like me."

"And how old are you now?"

"Funny you should ast me that," blushed Gilly, "seein' as I'm eighteen to-day!"

"Oh!" sopranoed Miss Oglethorpe with surprise. "You look such a child I never would have dreamed it. What I wanted to know for is that I was

intending to give you something for which I haven't any more use, only I thought you might be too young to wear it. But, dear me, if you're really eighteen——"

She stooped and began lifting out the contents of a large striped bandbox.

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Miss Oglethorpe balanced on her hand a mammoth hat with a high crown of interwoven wires covered with gold lace. Two theatrical purple plumes branched out astoundingly from the purple velvet brim.

"This is no good to me in the new show," she explained, "for the color scheme is to be red. The lace is a bit tarnished, but 'twon't show, and I thought, as long as you'd always been so good about sweeping out corners and running errands for me——" She struck the brim with her finger and the hat spun round alluringly.

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The small mirror above the kitchen sink was too narrow to give Gilly a full view of the huge hat at a glance, so she swayed slowly from left to right and from right to left to enjoy it panoramically. What mattered it that her best dress was a shiny old serge, that her shoes were shapeless from overuse, or that her gloves had broken into

course, could not be expected to know a hat from a hedgehog, asked her if she thought she was the only one who wanted to see Mary Pickford, and why not give others a chance? But even after she had regretfully bared her head and placed the hat in her lap, her calloused little fingers played through the soft plumes ecstatically and pride



"And I thought as long as you'd always been so good about sweeping out corners and running errands for me—" The hat spun round alluringly.

peepholes and smelled of gasoline? No one, she was sure, could take his eyes off such a marvelous hat long enough to notice the rest of the attire. She resolved to exhibit it that very evening at a neighboring reel palace.

Once there, and seated, she could not bring herself to remove the millinery mountain from her radiant locks until a blustering, bow-legged usher, who, of

reigned in her bosom. Until her gorgeous diadem should have been stowed away in the striped bandbox under her cot bed, she was still a princess in gold and purple.

Her royal illusions vanished at once, however, on her return to that region of back stairs where she daily chased the legions of dust and disorder. She had hardly closed the door behind her

when from far above she heard the harsh, complaining voice of Mrs. Hodfare, exercising itself for the benefit of some one who evidently knew of no means of escape.

"No, sir-ee! I shan't wait a day or two longer! That's what you've been askin' me to do for the last three weeks. But I ain't runnin' a Red Cross hospital, an' all your talk about bein' sick an' out of work don't cut no ice with me. If you don't dig up that



"Oh, Miss Oglethorpe!" Gilly gasped.

three weeks you're owin' me by to-morrow noon, out you go, an' the knob comes off this door, so's you can't count on sneakin' in again when my back's turned."

Rasping out further remarks in kind, she emerged jerkily into the hall, just in time to meet Gilly coming up the stairs.

"For the land sakes, Gilly!" she exclaimed. "You scared me, snoopin'

along so quiet when I didn't know you was in a mile of the place! An' I don't think that fly-away hat becomes you. It makes you look sort of pop-eyed. Miss Oglethorpe hadn't ought to turn a poor girl's head by givin' her such things. "An'"—she put out a restraining hand—"where you goin'?"

"To see what old Mr. Wheeler wants. He just called to me," answered Gilly.

"Let him call!" countermanded Mrs. Hodfare, standing with arms akimbo and raising her voice for the benefit of the dilatory roomer. "I ain't payin' you to wait on the likes of him, owin' me twelve dollars already an' tryin' to work on my feelin's to let him owe more! Go an' fix a bowl of ice for the card club. I told Mr. Feldner you'd bring it an' glasses up as soon as you got in. He always pays prompt an' in advance. Don't stop to take your things off. They're in a hurry."

Hat and all, Gilly turned and descended to the basement for a midnight wrestle with the ice-box. But all the time she was chipping crystal fragments from a big cube and dropping them into the bowl, her thoughts dwelt compassionately on old Mr. Wheeler.

She liked Mr. Wheeler. He looked like the pictures of Eddie Foy, and had been so jolly and kind before he had lost his job and fallen sick. Mrs. Hodfare was enough to scare him to death, stooping over him with her six-foot-one and her long face like a gray-stone coffin! She'd turn him out of the house, sure as shooting, the next day if some one didn't interfere. And where was that some one to come from? Gilly wiped the water off her hands and began to count the money in her own slimsy purse. The result was not hopeful. She wished she had not spent all her savings on a dentist and to get that bargain trunk. Both could have waited, and Mr. Wheeler couldn't. She went back to chipping ice, thinking very hard, but to no purpose.

By the time she had climbed the four flights leading to the card club, however, a hazy scheme had begun to form in her mind. She was so absorbed with watching it clarify itself that she stumbled over the threshold and nearly fell. Splinters of ice flew from the bowl, and the gift hat slid riotously over one eye, but the jar seemed somehow to shake down her ideas into final shape. She disposed of the tray and looked around for Feldner. The fact that she was wearing such an affluent-appearing hat gave her a moral courage she had never felt before. Feldner was there all right, but he had his back turned, talking to some one. She stood still, waiting for him to discover her.

There were perhaps a dozen men in the room, one of whom she did not remember to have seen before. He was plainly younger than the others, and there was something about his fresh complexion and luminous gray eyes that made Gilly give him a second look even while waiting to pounce upon Feldner. Perhaps it was that second look that encouraged the stranger to speak to her.

"Staying to take a hand?" he inquired jokingly, and Gilly could not help responding to the frank friendliness of his smile.

"No, 'tain't that," she replied. "I'm waitin' to speak to Mr. Feldner."

"Eh?" queried Feldner, catching her words and turning around.

One flaxen eyebrow arose almost to the rim of his scanty hair while the other descended until it threatened to close his eye—a facial contortion Gilly recognized as peculiar to him when his mood was unpleasant.

Instinctively her hands went to her hat. Before she spoke, she straightened it with care, needing all the support the knowledge of its magnificent presence could afford her.

"I don't s'pose you've heard about it, Mr. Feldner," she began, "but

there's an old man awful sick one flight down. His name's Wheeler, and he used to work in the post office. I took him in some ice water just now, and he's in such a fever he's almost out of his head. He's lived here ever since Mis' Hodfare began rentin' rooms and——"

"We don't want to hear about his troubles," snapped Feldner, interrupting her. "Go tell 'em somewhere else."

"But it ain't just that he's sick, Mr. Feldner," persisted Gilly earnestly. "Mis' Hodfare's goin' to put him out to-morrow because he's back with his rent."

"Don't want to hear about him," reiterated Feldner.

But Gilly, having once started, seemed unable to stop.

"If you'd just go in and look at him, maybe you'd feel different. He's so old, and—and lonesome, and scared! He ain't able to sit up, even, let alone go out and earn the money, like she tells him he ought, and I just thought, if you'd let me take up a little collection to pay off what he owes her——"

She paused expectantly.

"Hand-out stuff, eh?" It was not Feldner who spoke, but the fat man who was his pal. "Are you sure old Hodfare didn't put you up to coming in here herself?"

"Of course I'm sure!" denied Gilly indignantly. "Why, she'd raise Ned if she knew it for fear I'd make you mad. She ain't got no heart. She's just got a pocketbook in place of one." She put out her hands appealingly. "It'll only take twelve dollars to make her let up on him."

"Nothing doing," Feldner announced irritably, with a wave of his arm in the direction of the door. "Get out."

"You ain't very good mannered to talk to me like that!" flamed Gilly. Her hair was not red for nothing. "I ain't astin' anything for myself, but for a poor old geezer that's got to have the

money right straight off to-night if he gets it at all. You don't need to throw in anything yourself if you don't want to, but 'twouldn't do no harm for me to ast the others, would it?"

A sympathetic buzz from the crowd seemed only to add to Feldner's surly stubbornness. His eyes burned behind their pale lashes.

"Stop your gabbing and get out!" he snarled. "Get out, or I'll put you out!"

Gilly felt for her hat again.

"Not till I'm ready to go, you won't," she announced with an airiness that astonished her even more than it did Feldner, "or I'll blab! There's gamblin' goin' on in these rooms that ain't allowed by law, 'cause I heard Mis' Hodfare tell you so last week when you was tryin' to beat her down on the rent. She said if the policeman on this beat once got on to it——"

"You little blackmailer!" and Feldner strode across to where she stood. "You dare threaten me?"

Somebody loosed his clutching hand from Gilly's shoulder and pulled him away from her. It was the stranger.

"Whether it's blackmail or not, Feldner," he argued pleasantly, "you've got to kowtow to her nerve! When a girl no bigger than a good-sized splinter undertakes, single-handed and alone, to hold up a roomful of husky men, I say it's up to the men to compliment her by coming across."

"That's right!" "Sure!" chorused assenting voices, and with a disgusted exclamation, Feldner shrugged his shoulders and walked away.

Gilly, aware that her opportunity was now or never, picked up an empty tray from the table and started to pass it around. The first man she came to was the fat one. He thrust his hand importantly in his pocket and jingled some change, but made no move to produce it.

"Why don't you auction off that Fifth Avenue hat you're sporting?" he

sneered. "If you're so anxious to pay off Hodfare, you ought to be willing to throw in that much yourself."

Gilly stared at him, startled. A disagreeable shiver ran down her spine. But before her hesitation could be noticed, she swung the hat off her head as carelessly as a cowboy handling a sombrero.

"How much will you bid for it?" she challenged, holding it out toward him.

He backed away from her, nonplused, and the whole crowd laughed, except Feldner.

"I'll make the first bid and start her off at a dollar," volunteered the stranger. "I think those feathers would become my wife's complexion."

"A dollar—a dollar!" chanted Gilly, trying hard to recall some of the lingo of a neighborhood auctioneer. "I am offered the small sum of a dollar for this magnificent hat, suitable for a first-class lady! A dollar, a dollar, and if you're careful, the plumes ought to last you for a lifetime! Who'll raise the bid? A dollar—a dollar—— Don't all speak at once."

"Dollar seventy-five!" grunted a man with a pipe in his mouth.

"Goin' at a dollar seventy-five—seventy-five—seventy—— Look at them feathers, gentlemen, long as a subway express! Goin' at a dollar seventy-five—at a dol——"

"Two!" "Three!" "Four!" "Four and a half!" A succession of responses brought the bid up to seven dollars, and there it lagged.

"Goin' at seven! Goin' at seven!" Gilly repeated over and over. "Lucky number, but 'tain't enough. Why, 'most any high-class hat you can think of would look nervous alongside of this one! Goin' at seven, sacrificed at seven, at seven——"

"Seven and a half!" offered the stranger, raising his own bid by half a dollar.

Gilly stopped, discouraged, realizing

that the brief flare of enthusiasm had died down. Only the stranger still seemed interested.

"Well, it's yours, I guess," she said, hanging the hat on the corner of the chair beside him. "And I hope your wife will like it."

With a sinking heart, she watched him count the money out. She had let go of her dearest treasure only to find herself still helpless to rescue Mr. Wheeler. It was a blighting disappointment, but she tried hard to smile.

"Much obliged, Mr—er—er——"

"Burton, Richard Burton," supplied the stranger.

"Mr. Burton, and I'll go get the bandbox that belongs to it, so's you can carry it home to your wife."

"What's the rush?" Burton called after her as she started for the door. "The show isn't over yet."

"Huh?"

She turned to look back. Wonder of wonders! In addition to having been chief bidder at her auction sale, he had picked up the tray and was starting to pass it around! No one had ever stood by her like that before in all her starved, meager little life. She concluded that Mrs. Burton must have quite the best husband in the world, and wondered if she realized it.

"Here, fellows!" she heard him say. "The kiddo told us how much cash she had to raise to do any good, and we've allowed her to get stalled halfway up the ladder. Dig for your loose pennies, now, and come across!"

The response to his appeal was lively and when Gilly's champion at last emptied the tray into the inverted crown of his wife's lately acquired hat, it fairly sagged with heaviness.

"Here," he said, "keep this war bonnet for me until to-morrow, will you? Guess there's enough coin and a little to spare, maybe. Run along, now, and be happy!"

Gilly was sweeping off the stoop the

next morning when the front door opened and she saw Burton emerging.

"Didn't know I'd rented a room here, did you?" he laughed, enjoying her look of surprise. "Mrs. Hodfare has put me right across the hall from old Wheeler. I stepped in there on my way down. He told me you'd sent for a doctor. That's right. He looks about all in to me. Any further trouble from the landlady?"

"Mercy, no!" smiled Gilly. "She just grabbed the money and almost ate it up. She don't care whether I stole it nor how I got it—never ast a question! Guess she'll let Mr. Wheeler alone now till he's well again."

She put up her hand to shield her eyes from the brilliant sunshine, and looked at Burton inquiringly. He seemed to be waiting for something.

"Want your wife's hat right now?" she asked. "She ain't upstairs, is she? You ain't brung her yet, have you?"

Burton laughed.

"I haven't any wife, kiddo. She seemed to be needed for the auction sale, so I invented her—that's all."

"Huh?" exclaimed Gilly, unable to dispose of the wife as suddenly as he had done. "What d'say?"

"I say I invented her—for an excuse to bid on the hat and start off the others."

"Then who——" began Gilly dazedly.

"You," he said, answering her unspoken words. "Keep it, or do anything with it you like. It's yours. I've no one to give it to. So long!"

Before she could thank him, he had waved his hand to her and boarded a passing car. A huckster with a load of geraniums shut off the view of him. Gilly hailed the huckster. Straight up to Burton's room she went, when she had spent her little all for a plant with two rose-pink blossoms, and set it on his window sill. He would never know where the flowers came from, but it



"Goin' at a dollar seventy-five—seventy-five—
Look at them feathers, gentlemen, long as a
subway express! Goin' at a dollar seventy-
five—at a dol—"

was her humble little way of thanking him.

Mr. Wheeler's bronchitis was worse the next day, and for some time his condition remained critical. Gilly put in all of her spare hours looking after him, and Burton was a frequent and friendly visitor.

"Shan't I send in some more sherry and eggs—or is there anything else he needs?" he inquired one morning, encountering the housemaid in the dusty gloom of the third-floor hall.

"Gilly! Gilly!" shrieked Mrs. Hod-

fare interruptingly from somewhere below. "Don't forget it's sweepin' day for the card club!"

"No'm," shrilled Gilly back to her, "I won't." She stood aside to let Burton pass, crumpling in her arms a musty rug. "He seems to take to sherry best of anything," she answered him, "and there's only about a table-spoonful left."

"I'll get it here by noon," promised Burton. "Gilly isn't your real name, is it?" he continued irrelevantly, lowering his voice to a cautious murmur.

"Of course it ain't my real name," replied Gilly, blushing violently as she always did when Burton gave her his special attention. "I should hope it ain't any one's."

She thrust her supple body half out of a window to give the rug a few resounding flaps. As she did so, Burton noticed for the first time the shabbiness of her shoes, that her dress was skimpy and faded, and that her elbows peered from her ragged sleeves as hungrily as a couple of beggars' noses. But how high she carried that little red-gold head of hers in spite of her poverty! She looked like what Burton would have dubbed in his boyhood vernacular "a high-class dame." But when she spoke, her uncultured accents proclaimed her to be distinctly of the common herd and within reaching distance. Burton was glad of this. He was common and reachable himself.

"Before I quit goin' to school back home," vouchsafed Gilly, seeing that Burton had seated himself on the banister railing for further conversation, "they used to nickname me 'Owl Eyes' and 'Redhead,' and I don't know what all. And I've been nicknamed ever since. Mis' Hodfare it was that started callin' me 'Gilly.' Why, if any one was to up and sing out 'Angela' to me, like I was baptized, I think I'd drop dead from the shock!"

"No, you wouldn't, Angela," denied Burton, with something in his voice that made her avert her head in a sudden delicious fluttering. "And while we're on the subject, what's the rest of your name?"

"Aw," said Gilly, blushing still more redly than before, "what do you want to know for?"

"For fun," laughed Burton, to put her at her ease.

Gilly turned toward him, then, smoothing back her crinkly hair consciously.

"Well, if I was goin' to have it on a

visitin' card, I'd write it out, 'Angela Dodd McGinnis.' I ain't much stuck on it, though."

"Oh, I don't know," answered Burton reflectively. "It fits you pretty well, at that! Especially the Angela part. Your eyes are Angela to the limit."

"Huh?" Gilly was unused to compliments, veiled or otherwise.

"Your nose is Dodd as thunder, though," resumed Burton, rather hastily, "prim as they make 'em, and your mouth"—he laughed boyishly, and held his hat up as if to ward off a retaliatory swipe from her dust cloth—"is big and McGinnis from as far as any one can see it."

"You ain't got such a small one yourself," retorted Gilly, delighted at his teasing, "even if your name ain't Irish like mine."

She peeped surreptitiously after him as he ran whistling down the stairs. She liked him enormously and wished she knew more about him. She longed passionately to defend him to Mrs. Hodfare.

"There's somethin' very suspicious about that young feller," Mrs. Hodfare had said to her recently, "or why should he lay it on us not to let the card club know he's roomin' here? An' I don't like his not tellin' where he's workin' or how he gets his money. I shouldn't be a bit surprised if the p'leece broke in here some night an' took him off as a burglar."

But it was a very unburglarlike exit indeed that Burton made from the Hodfare premises when the time came for him to go. The news of that exit fell with a blighting chill on Gilly's unprepared heart.

"Just paid up an' cleared out without givin' no reason for it nor givin' me any warnin' he was goin'," Mrs. Hodfare sniffed indignantly. "An' I could have rented his room to a movin'-picture actor if I had knowed it beforehand. For the land sakes, Gilly, you're

all white around the nose an' look like you was seein' ghosts! I hope you ain't ben foolin' yourself thinkin' he was stuck on you. I could have told you from the beginnin' that you wasn't his sort!"

That was just it, Gilly told herself, as she crept up the stairs that night to take her accustomed—but, oh, so lonely!—post at Mr. Wheeler's bedside. She was "not his sort," and he had doubtless gone back forever to where lived some girl who was. Even against the voice of her own heart, she defended him.

"It was all right for him to go away without botherin' about seein' me if he felt like it," she whispered fiercely; then suddenly surprised herself by crying out: "No, it wasn't fair, and it ain't right, it ain't, it ain't!"

For to the humblest soul there must inevitably seem something wrong with the universe when that soul has given of its best in vain, whether that best be talent or service or unrequited love.

Mr. Wheeler, disturbed by her smothered sobs, had drawn the sheet up over his face and was now comfortably asleep again. He was rapidly recovering.

Gilly dried her tears and bent with determined interest over her sewing. She was fastening a loosened feather into place on the ever-treasured hat.

Suddenly, without so much as a foot-fall to give warning of his approach, Burton opened the door, quickly, silently, and closed it behind him, standing with his back against it, breathing hard. He was hatless, and his clothing looked as if he had been crawling along a dusty floor. Gilly, transfixed with surprise, remained immovable, her needle poised in air. When she recovered herself enough to get to her feet, Burton put his hand out warningly for silence, listening intently for some expected disturbance on the other side of the door.

"I don't think Feldner saw me," he whispered, "but I'm not sure. I've got the goods on him all right, though," he added triumphantly, to Gilly's further mystification, "and— Sh!" He stopped short, listening again; then, after one glance to right and left, he made a swift dive across the room and disappeared as neatly under the bed as if it had been an ocean breaker. Gilly, her astonishment increasing, saw the long fringe of the white counterpane drop back smoothly into place, concealing him from view.

What had Burton done? Who was after him? Mrs. Hodfare's dark hints returned to her. Rigid with fear, she clung to the big purple hat as to a life-preserver, giving an involuntary cry when a resounding thwack on the door announced the arrival of some one else.

The newcomer was Feldner, his face distorted with rage. Even in her terror, Gilly noticed how his flaxen eyebrows bristled as if each separate hair were standing on end. Instinctively she knew that he was looking for Burton and for no good purpose. She backed toward the bed, still clutching her hat, her gaze fixed on Feldner inquiringly.

"Who's in that bed?" he snarled suspiciously, his eyes traveling about the bare room and back again in a flash. He pointed to the swathed body of Wheeler.

"N-no one," she stammered confusedly, losing her head, and now she stood so close to the bed that her heel struck against Burton's body.

"I asked who's there, and you'd better answer!" he threatened, starting toward her. As he did so, Gilly let the big hat slide to her feet and thrust out both arms to ward him off.

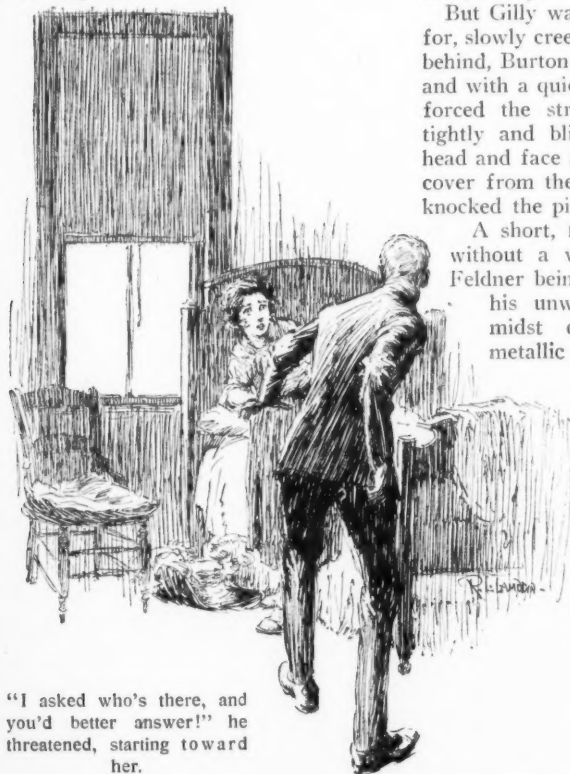
"Keep away from him!" she cried, thinking only of Burton under the bed and not of Wheeler in it, but of course this was something Feldner could not know. Instantly he grasped her by one

outstretched hand and flung her half across the room.

"Don't!" she screamed, as she saw him draw a pistol; then almost laughed, in the midst of her fears, as poor old Mr. Wheeler, in response to a tug from Feldner's rough hand, sat up in bed, looking petrified and uncomprehending into the barrel of the intruder's drawn weapon.

"Bah!"

With a cry of disgust Feldner shoved the old man back upon his pillows and, turning, advanced toward Gilly, now close by the door. As he did so, she saw her hat slide mysteriously out of sight beneath the dropped edge of the counterpane.



"I asked who's there, and you'd better answer!" he threatened, starting toward her.

"Where's Burton?" Feldner demanded, between his set teeth. "Have you seen him?"

And then, though her eyes did not move from Feldner's face, she saw Burton rise from beneath the bed on the other side, the huge hat held in his hand as she had seen boys hold theirs when about to capture a grasshopper or a butterfly, and love gave her the wisdom to give a calm answer and to hold Feldner's gaze with the steadfastness of her own.

"Mis' Hodfare said he paid up and moved somewhere else this mornin'—she don't know where."

"You haven't seen him about here, then, to-day?"

But Gilly was not required to reply, for, slowly creeping upon Feldner from behind, Burton now raised the hat high and with a quick downward movement forced the strong wire crown of it tightly and blindingly over Feldner's head and face and, before he could recover from the surprise of the attack, knocked the pistol from his hand.

A short, fierce struggle followed, without a word from either man, Feldner being badly handicapped by his unwelcome mask. In the midst of it came a short, metallic click. Burton had snapped a pair of handcuffs on the wrists of his opponent. As soon as Feldner realized what had happened, he ceased to struggle and was quiet.

"Take the bonnet off him now, will you, Gilly?" requested Burton, somewhat winded, but polite, and Gilly obeyed, knowing no fear so long as he stood beside her.

"And now," further directed Burton, keeping a grip on Feldner's arm, "please go and tell Mrs. Hodfare to cast an eye over those rooms back of Feldner's card-club parlor—the ones he kept locked and never asked to have cleaned—and see what she finds there. It's about time she caught on to what's been going on here behind closed doors. Tell her not to be scared, though. The shells and powder can't explode of themselves, and there's a big supply of them to help out Uncle Sam at a pinch. Tell her I rounded up Feldner's accomplice before I got him. The others were only ordinary gamblers and didn't know they were being used as a blind by a traitor to our flag."

It was a day of many emotions for Gilly. Half an hour after Feldner's sensational departure under guard, and when the police had removed the astonishing arsenal of whose existence neither Mrs. Hodfare nor Gilly herself had dreamed, she went back to Mr. Wheeler's room on an errand intimately connected with the last dramatic scene enacted there.

The room was empty. The convalescent Mr. Wheeler, stimulated by the electrical character of the events taking place around him, had left his bed, in spite of her protests, to start for a slow constitutional around the block.

Gilly had brought her workbasket along with her, and it was needed. The Ogleshorpe hat, having been employed for purposes of use as well as beauty, was now a badly battered affair. Gilly handled it reverently, straightening out bent wires and mending torn lace. It would always be associated with Burton in her mind, always seem a sort of purple-and-gold bond between them.

The discovery that Burton, kind and gentle as a girl, had all the time been a noted detective, playing a big and dangerous game, filled her with awe. But though now he seemed farther away from her than ever, she experienced

a delicious thrill over the recollection that at the last even she, Gilly, had been of some small service to him—she and her hat!

"Gilly! Gilly!" It was Mrs. Hodfare summoning her from dreams of Burton back to the rut of daily drudgery.

She arose and laid the hat carefully on a shelf, along with her workbasket. She experienced some difficulty with the knob when she reached the door, and discovered that it was because some one had hold of it from the other side. She let go, and Burton opened the door and walked in.

"Hello, Gilly! I've been all over the house looking for you."

Gilly did not reply. There are some situations too deep for words. Obeying a blind, primal instinct, forgetting the uncrossable distance that yawned between them, she flung herself headlong into Burton's arms, bursting into a storm of happy tears, wasting fervent kisses on his shirt front, clinging with small hands that threatened never to let go.

"There, there!" he soothed, with an odd break in his voice. "I guess I understand. I guess it's the same with you as it's been with me, kiddo, from that first minute I met you at Feldner's. I knew it was all up with me then."

"No, no!" sobbed Gilly, words coming to her aid at last. "I ain't expectin' nothin' of you, even if I have give myself away from seein' you so unexpected."

He smoothed back the cloud of damp curls from her forehead.

"Don't talk like that. Why, Gilly—Angela—if you could ever dream what finding the right girl means to a boy that never had any childhood outside of an orphan asylum, that never had a real home in his life, you'd know what happiness is! Of course you're too pretty and dainty and good for me—I

know that. I'm more or less of a self-educated roughneck——"

"You're not!" denied Gilly passionately. "You're the greatest man in the world, and I'm only Mis' Hodfare's servant girl, with my hands all spoiled from slingin' pots and pans, and——"

"Gilly! What on earth——"

It was Mrs. Hodfare herself.

"Throw us a friendly grin instead of a scowl, won't you, Mrs. Hodfare?" said Burton, restraining Gilly as she tried to break away from him. "And go get on your walking duds, for I'm inviting you to a wedding. This kiddo is commissioned to put the nippers on me for life, and I'm a willing victim.

We're going to beat it down to City Hall right now for a license and the ceremony."

"You ain't meanin' it, an' I don't believe it!" declared Mrs. Hodfare, but already her hands had begun hastily to undo her apron. Even the Hodfares of life become almost human under some circumstances, and a wedding is a wedding.

"But what'll I wear?" gasped Gilly, white with ecstasy. "I ain't got nothin' fit to get married in."

"Why," suggested Burton, pointing it out, "there's your hat, to begin with."

"Oh, yes!" remembered Gilly hopefully. "That's so——there's my hat——"

A WAGON FROM THE WEST

(In Time of Drouth)

UPON the open road, once hid
By waving flowers aglow,
A prairie schooner jogs, as did
Its elders, years ago,
Equipped and fashioned much as they—
But ah, it goes the other way!

Gaunt horses move it. At their rein
The farmer plods along,
His brown face all a mesh of pain,
So hard this year, so strong
The push of trouble, drouth, distress,
So sad this yielding to their press.

Yet, hanging o'er the wagon's side,
The towheads shout with glee—
Just one long ecstasy, this ride,
So much to do and see!—
While their own cockerel crows with zeal,
And Towzer trots beside the wheel.

The mother hears their laughter, cheers
To a wan, wistful smile.
Her brave foremothers, bygone years,
Pushed westward, mile by mile.
The East may yield as fine a thing.
And her clasped baby hears her sing!

JEANNIE PENDLETON HALL.

The Bond

By Anne Marshall

Author of "Glamour of Dead Days," "Contrasts," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY LAURA E. FOSTER

Estranged from her husband, she determined to be free. But, quite unexpectedly, "the bond" loomed up.

FOR twenty-two years, she told herself, she had lived in intolerable subordination to Jim; or, to be exact, for nineteen—eighteen years. The first three years of their married life, she would be honest enough to admit, had not been trying; they were still glamorous. And the fourth, when she had been finally, though gradually, awaking to Jim's tyrannical possibilities, had not been entirely miserable.

By the time, at the beginning of the fifth year, when she had realized the folly of their marriage, he had had her fast bound. There had been the three children, Lucile, the first born, and the twins, Don and Arthur. She had come to a full comprehension of her condition of serfdom, along with a perfect understanding of its unescapable quality. She had three children; until they were grown up, she was bound, by her duty to them, to live with Jim Eldridge, who was their father and their means of support and education. Having deliberately brought the children into being, it was her plain duty to provide for them. She knew quite well, with unavailing bitterness of spirit, that she could not provide for them materially as Jim could; she believed that Jim could not provide for them spiritually as she could; therefore, she and Jim must go on living together.

But now that Lucile was married—her wedding had been precipitate, a war-hurried affair—and that the boys

had followed their own inclination and their father's advice—so diametrically opposed to her desires—and had gone into the Coast Artillery, there was nothing to tie her any longer to Jim. She had done her job, and she dared to say that she had done it well. She had kept her husband's house carefully, charmingly, thriftily, putting aside all those vagrant longings of her own for a palette and an easel, in order to be the perfect housekeeper, the admirable hostess; she had surrounded the children with affection, with devotion; she had never let the cloud of her own disillusionment rest on their young lives. Jim had seconded her rather magnificently in that, she admitted. But, at last, she was free.

Free from what? From Jim's tyranny. It had been relentlessly exerted all these years. She remembered, as if it had been yesterday, the first time she had understood the nature of his domination. He had forbidden her to receive Gladys Herschel. Forbidden it! He had declined to argue the question. He had imposed his will upon her. He had referred, she remembered, to the sort of woman he did not propose to see in "his" house! That possessive pronoun had been at the very kernel of the sore that had rankled all these years.

Of course, as it had turned out, he had been quite right about Gladys. But that had been a caprice of circumstance,

and it had not altered the fact that he had commanded her, his wife—commanded her, instead of pleading with her on the theme of his wishes!

It had been he who had chosen the suburb in which they lived. She had wanted Rosebank, where there was a whole colony of people whom she knew. He had swept aside her preference. They were to buy on the outskirts of Greenacres; the elevation was good from the point of view of health and the development, sure to occur, would be good for their purse. That she didn't know any people in Greenacres was nothing; undoubtedly she would know more of them than she desired before long. So they had settled in Greenacres, and the situation had been salubrious, and the property had increased fabulously in value, and the colony had been most hospitable and delightful. Nevertheless, he had imposed his will in the matter like a dictator. Now she could—and would—go to live in New York. He had always coldly ruled against even two or three months a year there—had said he didn't like the city, and had never inquired whether or not she liked it!

In short, they had lived Jim's sort of life, not hers. She had never had that gift upon which, so she understood from current literature, modern women were so strenuously bent—a chance for self-expression. So little had she had it that she had come almost to forget that she had ever wanted it. Had not the war brought once more into strong relief the antagonism between Jim's ideals and tastes and her own, perhaps she would have forgotten forever that she was an individual with a right, a divine right, to her own life! But the war had come and had illuminated all the divergences. Hotly, fiercely, she believed in peace, she believed in nonresistance. Jim had laughed at her first expression of opinion; he had dismissed her views

as those of a "nut;" he had described the men and women who held them as "nuts." By and by, he had been no longer amused and had spared her his slangy characterization of those whom she respected, believed in, wished to follow. And he had encouraged the boys in their enlistment. Of course, it had not made much difference! The country was so entirely of Jim's mind that the poor lads would have been drafted, anyway.

So she was going to leave him. Thanks to Aunt Helen's little legacy—how surprised he had been when she had refused to give it to him for investment!—she could support herself. She could begin at forty-four the work she had laid down at twenty-two. She could find her circle of affinities—not the conventional, comfortable, commonplace circle of Jim's choice. She could preach peace from the street corners and be put in prison for it, if she chose. She could be free.

It would be, she supposed, a blow to him. He had not had the imagination to conceive her rebellion, and because she had accepted existence as he had decreed it, and had not vulgarly squabbled for her own way, he had probably thought her content. Well, now, he would learn the truth. Poor Jim! It would be a blow to his vanity, to that masculine head-of-the-house pride of his. He cared for his standing among his fellows; he would hate to admit that he had been a failure in that very relation where he had seemed most to succeed! Ah, well, he had his other successes to remember! He was prosperous; he was honored among men; he was looked up to in his profession. Let those suffice him. It would only be during the process of readjustment, only during the first onslaught of surprise, that he would suffer badly.

Jim came slowly up the stairs and



"Jim! What made you think that?"

She almost thought it was
not true.

into her room. The door was slightly ajar, and he was all too frequently an offender against the code that prescribes a knock upon even the conjugal door. She was glad he had forgotten to rap—it was an added grievance. But what was the matter with him?

His face was very white. There

were deeply grained lines about his mouth and eyes that had not been there that morning. He looked toward her with a curiously intent scrutiny.

"What is it, Jim?" she found herself saying. "Lucile? The boys——"

"All right. It's not that. May I sit down? Thanks."

There was a dew of perspiration on his forehead, and he mopped it with his handkerchief.

"Jim, what is it?"

His mouth twisted into an imitation of a smile.

"I've got to tell you, though, after all, it doesn't interest you greatly—except financially. You've been estranged from me so long—you don't care. It's money. We're wiped out."

"What are you talking about?"

"About money. Our money—your money—the children's. Everything will be gone. Worthington has just told me. While I was campaigning last fall, Worthington—Worthington—I left everything in the office to Worthington—"

"Yes, yes!"

Worthington had been his partner for almost as long as they, he and she, had been married.

"Well, he's been speculating—the old, old, damnable thing!—with trust funds. You know how many trust estates we have the charge of in the office. He's wiped out. He had a revolver to his head in his office when I happened upon him this morning."

"The posing coward!"

"No. I think he meant it. But I got it away from him and the story out of him. Viola, it will take everything I can rake and scrape together to pay those people back fifty on a dollar, and all the rest of my life to earning the other fifty. And your money is wiped out along with the rest—"

"As if I cared about that!" she flashed back at him.

"You were always a brick," he said heavily. "But now—when you've so long ago stopped caring for me, when you were planning—you were planning it, weren't you?—to make some sort of escape from me—"

"Jim! What made you think that?" She almost thought it was not true.

"Just felt it in my bones, as my mammy used to say. Well, I don't blame you. I've been overbearing, and now I've lost your money for you—"

"I've got Aunt Helen's, you know," she reminded him practically. "We could begin again on that, couldn't we?"

"We?"

"Oh, Jim! If you—love—me! If you need me! Do you need me?"

"I don't want you to stay out of pity—"

"Pity!"

Where had it gone, that desire of hers for self-expression, that overmastering determination to live her own life? She was speaking hotly, as if she loved him. She hesitated, pondered. Then she had a moment's flash of light.

It was where she was needed that she wanted to stay. To serve was her only avenue of self-expression—to serve where she was needed! Jim needed her, horribly; Jim had miraculously understood her; therefore, he was capable of continuing to understand her. That was joyful, but not so joyful as the fact that he needed her.

There was upon her face as she turned toward him such a look of radiance as he had not seen there for eighteen years.

Half a Man

By Josephine A. Meyer

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

A Two-Part Mystery Story. Part II.

WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED.

Doctor Finch and his friend Higgenbotham, camping in the Adirondacks, are surprised by the sudden appearance of a "wild man of the woods," scantily clad, unshaven, and unspeakably dirty. This man is perfectly rational and even shows signs of education and refinement, but he is like a newborn child in the matter of memory. The doctor and Higgenbotham become much interested in their protégé and take him back to New York with them in the hope that his memory will return. Until it does, he is to serve as Higgenbotham's valet, under the name of Charlie Smith. In an effort to bring back the past, the doctor takes him to a vaudeville theater where he is very disagreeably affected by the performance of a cheap actress, Leila Gitelle. As they are coming out, Charlie is joyfully hailed by a half-intoxicated young man of fashionable appearance as "Chris Ferrian." Chris Ferrian, investigation discloses, is the dissipated son of a very wealthy man, the hero of many scandals, among which is a marriage—later annulled through family influence—to a disreputable woman. This affair had at the time recalled a similar episode in the life of the elder Ferrian. Chris has been missing for some time, and his father has gone West to investigate a rumor that he has been seen out there. Confronted with friends of young Ferrian's, Charlie is recognized by them all; his identity seems proved beyond question and he is taken up to his family home at Ossining, where his Cousin Barbara is waiting to receive him. It is a case of love at first sight with Chris, and Barbara in her turn is strongly drawn to the grave, gentle man who has taken the place of her dissipated cousin. She hesitates to give way to her feeling, however, because of her fear that a return of memory will bring back the old Chris; and Chris is held back by his sense of duty toward his unknown wife. He has a strong impression, too, that there was a son, and he considers that, in spite of the annulment, he owes a name and protection to this child. Affairs are in this state when Chris gets word that his father is very ill with pneumonia on his Montana ranch and wants to see him at once.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE Ferrian family lawyer, a Mr. John Everly, was at the depot with Peyton to meet Chris' train. He had been summoned to Montana by the seriousness of Mr. Ferrian's illness, and so was to be Chris' fellow traveler. Chris had met him before and had taken a dislike to him. He was a neatly built, small, elderly man with a keen, clean-shaven face, sharp eyes, and a self-satisfied manner. He had been inclined from the start to consider himself *in loco parentis* to Chris, and had taken the opportunities that offered themselves before to hint to Chris that his former life had been

reprehensible and that he owed a duty to society and to his own family name.

When they were alone on the train and these opportunities became unlimited, Chris suffered for his past to the limit of his endurance. The lawyer had a smooth manner and a certain soothing note in his voice, as if seeking to calm his companion, that added to poor Chris' irritation. It was as if Everly were constantly accusing him of bad temper.

And after a while Chris became aware of something else in the lawyer's manner, something that, in Peyton, never failed to exasperate him. This was an unspoken, bland, almost

tender disbelief in the completeness of his loss of memory.

Such unattractive messengers does fate choose to bear to us the news we most long to hear.

The lawyer elected to lead from the disparagement of the disreputable past to the pious hope of future reform through a time-honored route—marriage and "settling down."

"I should like—do not smile—I should like to see you marry some good woman. That has been the saving of men like you in the past, and doubtless always will be."

Chris grew scarlet and spoke with an effort.

"I am going to marry soon. That was my plan."

"Very good. Do I know the young lady?"

"I never thought—perhaps you do. I was going to ask my father for her whereabouts, but you, as our lawyer, ought to know just as well." Chris was utterly unconscious of the effect this speech was going to have.

"What?" exploded Everly.

"It's because I don't remember—of course."

"Don't remember what?"

"Why—anything about her."

"And you want to marry her?"

"No, I don't want to. But it's the only thing to do. Not for her so much as to give the child a name."

"What on earth do you mean?"

Everly looked thoroughly discomfited. He resented seeming not to understand anything any one expected him to understand as much as he enjoyed knowing more than people suspected him of knowing.

"Weren't you our lawyer at the time?" asked Chris, disturbed.

"At what time?" snapped Everly. "I've been your father's lawyer for the exceedingly short term of only thirty years." When exasperated, Everly en-

joyed the most obvious forms of sarcasm.

"Then," said Chris, with relief, "you ought to know. It was my marriage, which was annulled when I was expelled from Harvard."

"God save us!" ejaculated Everly, and then, recovering, "Well, what of it?"

"I must find her again and remarry her," explained Chris simply.

"You must—— Who told you you must?" Everly seemed on the verge of choking. "Young man, that—that—unspeakable woman has been married five years, and you know it!"

"Married!" Chris' face seemed to blaze with joy. "Then I can't marry her! And the child—is he well cared for?"

"What damnable nonsense are you talking? There is no child. Your father gave her a big wedding present and provided a very decent young man for her—one of the clerks in his Western mining office."

"And are they happy?"

The lawyer shrugged contemptuously.

"That's their lookout." Then he gathered together his smoldering impatience. "You can be damn' glad to be out of it so well and to forget it now. What do you suppose would have become of you if we hadn't got you out of it? And now you want to turn round and get mixed up again in it! Marry—her sort!"

Chris' elation had died down and reason was setting in.

"What other kind am I fit for—after all you've told me about myself?" he demanded bitterly.

When Everly was proven wrong, like many others, he interpreted it as being wronged. He received Chris' unconscious reproof as an intentional slight. He decided not to open his mouth on the subject again, not because he had opened it too industriously before, but

because he felt he was wasting oratory on an ingrate.

The frigid politeness he assumed was so far an improvement on his nagging paternalism that by the time they reached Chicago, the frigidity had thawed. As they proceeded deeper into the West, he developed what struck him as a startling liking for the younger man. Chris was so flatteringly attentive to all he said, and so refreshingly credulous. He never questioned the sources of Everly's histories of the towns they passed, nor his computations of the miles of prairies, or Lis, at times, amazing geographical deductions on "recognizing" some mountain or lake.

And at last the great gray-brown and white-ridged uplands of Montana began to roll by the windows, bleak under the early winter that had stricken it; and about three o'clock of a biting-cold afternoon, they arrived at the ugly little station of the town nearest to the ranch that was their destination.

They were welcomed on the platform by a lean, red-faced man who seemed to be a personage.

This, Everly explained, was Flower, the superintendent of the ranch. He had driven over in a machine to take the newcomers home and to give them the latest reports from the sick room.

He stared in some astonishment at Chris, swearing mildly under his breath.

"The de-vil! You're—you're lookin' too well!" he criticized at last. "Why, man—I ain't hardly knowed ye!"

He continued to gaze, almost mournfully, as Everly tediously gave an account of Chris' loss of memory and complete reform. Chris tried to listen, but found his eyes wandering, and every now and then, left his group to shake the hand of some embarrassed townsman who seemed awkwardly to expect it of him. Most of these friends of his past got no further than to tell him he "looked fine" or to hope that no harm would come to his "paw."

They seemed, on the whole, glad to get their greetings over, though they stood in knots near by, evidently discussing him, and when they caught his eyes, they smiled, genially and reassuringly.

Meantime, Everly completed his thesis and Flower turned on Chris.

"On the water wagon, by God!" he cried enthusiastically, and the flush on his cheeks and the fire in his eye should have warned Everly beforehand that the seed of his homily was not falling on fruitful ground. "Well, Kit, I'm surprised to hear it! Good for you, son! Come on over to Mickey's and have one on me to celebrate it."

"Surely not now!" gasped Everly.

"Yes," said Chris perversely. "I want to."

Amidst the roar of laughter that Flower discharged and, by contact, exploded among the bystanders, Chris defiantly followed the superintendent, while the lawyer, red with anger, followed Chris.

The reception at the saloon was a tribute to Chris' past.

There were several men there who had not gone out to meet the train, notably one who was quite too unsteady on his feet to meet anything he aimed for. This one, whom the men called "Dolly," shook hands with Chris at intervals all during the visit to the bar. At times he would seem to be weeping over Chris and garrulously pouring out what appeared to be a steady, but unnavigable stream of abject apology for some past wrong.

"I tho't 'twas you," he reiterated. "I admit—I ad-mit. But I didn't never see his face. I jes' took the word of a ——— stranger, jes' a ——— stranger. I orter ner—never're done it. 'Tain't like me. You know. 'Tain't like me. An' he—he swore he seen ye, the ——— liar, in Frisco—coked—in one o' them ——— dope dives—coked!"

Such, at least, was the burthen of

his discourse. Its actual sequence was impossible to trace, but from it all Chris got the sketchy impression that a friend of Dolly's had met him in San Francisco under conditions that even Dolly found deplorable.

Later, Flower, somewhat the worse for his festive stop-off, interpreted Dolly's speech as an expression of sorrow for having believed a cowboy who had reported having seen Chris in an opium den.

"He's referrin' to a cow-puncher—claimed to've pal'd with you in Frisco. Name o' Nevvins. Know him?"

"I can't remember," answered Chris.

"What rot!" exclaimed Everly. "In the first place, you never were in San Francisco. That's that old false clew they gave us about a month ago. There was nothing to it but fumes of alcohol."

Flower chuckled at the metaphor, and his chuckling, as he bent over the wheel of the car, made more palpable to those who rode with him the reason of its suggestion to the lawyer's mind.

Then they rode on in silence through the gold slant of the low sun, and Chris watched the depressingly frozen, empty country around him and tried to keep his mind on the father he was so soon to see.

CHAPTER XV.

Flower had told them that a big doctor from Chicago had been summoned and would arrive that night. Meantime, the local doctor, who had completely deserted his practice in the town, twelve miles away, was living at the ranch, so as to give its owner his full attention. This man, Doctor Reed, now welcomed them, with effusion.

"He was so anxious to see his son," he said. "Of course," he added to Chris, "I may only permit you to be with him for a short time. His temperature is very high. At times he is a little out of his head. At such times"—a relish for the sentimental forced a

tremulo into his soothing voice—"he always imagines he is with the son he loves. Wait here. I'll go and prepare him immediately."

Chris waited in the long, oblong room that formed the chief apartment of the first floor of this building, which was much more like a fashionable summer home than a ranch. There were great logs in the fireplace that dominated one end of the room, and before the handsome blaze of these logs, Chris stood warming his hands and wishing he could warm his heart, too, to something more natural and filial than the detached curiosity that seemed to deaden it. Then his thoughts drifted along a path they had worn clear with much usage, these days. What was Barbara doing? How would she act when he told her of the good news he had heard from Everly? He wondered how deep-seated her prejudice against the marriage of cousins really was. But that was going a bit far. He pulled himself up sharply.

Doctor Reed was calling to him from the staircase.

"He's ready," said the doctor. "Follow me."

He led the way to the broad upper hall and paused for a moment beside his patient's door.

"Prepare for a change in him," he warned kindly. "Fever, you know, is a fearful ravager."

Chris stepped into the room.

Propped up on pillows, his emaciated face softened under the guarded glow of the electric lamp on the table beside the bed, was a man whose every feature was a claim of their blood relationship. Chris noted this with wonder rather than with emotion, and approached the invalid quietly.

"Father," he called softly.

The hollow eyes opened quickly and eagerly. For an instant a fleeting memory filled Chris with hope. Then the hope sank. The momentary recog-



"The de-vil! You're—you're lookin' too well!" he criticized at last. "Why, man—I ain't hardly knowed ye!"

dition he had experienced connected up, through Barbara, with the incompletely noticed companion she had had with her the night he had first seen her at the depot.

It was thus he had to remember his own father!

"Chris—Kit!" The feeble hands fumbled impatiently with the bed-clothes. "My son—come—here. Come close."

Chris went over to the bed, where the light would fall on him fully. He suddenly became conscious that the nurse was watching him. He became more and more constrained.

And still he felt no bond with this strange sick man, no love, no real pity, nothing but a resentful embarrassment and a horrible desire to act up and conceal his coldness from the critical eyes of the nurse.

"Kit—I'm glad——" All at once, the eyes of the invalid became fixed and glassy. "You!" he cried out with unexpected force. "You? How dare you—now—now? Go 'way! Get out! Get out! Get out!"

He tried to push Chris from him, and the voice that had at first quavered so feebly now rose to a loud and hideous scream.

In a moment Chris, inert with astonishment, was seized by doctor and nurse and hurried out of the room. They then left him, to return to their patient, and he stood alone, outside his father's door, lost in the corridor of his own house.

Not knowing the whereabouts of his room, he retraced his steps to the lower hall. Here he found Flower, his face redder than ever, swaying a little as he warmed his hands before the fire.

"Mr. Chris, I tell ye, it ain't fair!" greeted Flower in a loud, querulous voice. "Ain't I jes' brought you an' the lawyer here? An' me near froze on the trip! An' now, if that damned soft-headed Fillmore ain't sent Crabbe off to Long Bridge fer medicine an' no word to him to meet the Chicago doctor at Pinto! I ain't goin' down to Pinto ag'in to-night. I'd do a lot fer the gov'ner, but I'm froze through, an' it's a hell of a trip a night like this, an' I'd have to drive like the devil to git to the damn' train on time! I don't see why I gotter come across for every bunch of boneheads there's livin' here on this ranch. God, they kin all hot-air a lot about dooty to the gov'ner, but there ain't a one o' them that'd go with me! An' if I don't go, there's the doctor waitin' there, sore as hell, an' God knows how he'll take it outer yer pore ol' dad! But if nobody don't care, why should I? Not that I wouldn't sell my damn' shirt fer you or the gov'ner, but, by God, I ain't always agoin' to be the goat!"

Chris broke in as soon as he was able to gather, from this flow of indignant self-pity, just what the trouble was.

"You'd go if some one went with you?" he demanded.

"An' who'll go 'long on a night like this? Yes, damn' them, they kin all talk, but there ain't a one of them missin' no supper ner fire to do the guv'ner ner you a good turn. I wouldn't 'a' said a word, Kit—you know me—

on'y I bin once. Ain't I no more'n jest brought you back? An' you kin tell 'em all it ain't no balmy summer eve out there, neither. Now——"

Chris discovered it was best not to wait for a pause in this truly masterly torrent of oratory, so he cut in quickly:

"I'll go with you. Ring for the man to bring my things."

Flower's jaw dropped.

"But your paw! He'll be wantin' you——"

"No, he won't. He's seen me enough for a while. And he needs that doctor more than he needs me. My coat and hat—warm things. I'm going with Flower to Pinto," he ordered, when a servant answered the bell.

Doctor Reed came down the stairs in time to hear this order.

"Why, Mr. Ferrian, what do you intend to do?" he inquired, in some alarm.

"Help Flower fetch the Chicago doctor. He won't go without company. The ride will do me good. How's father?"

"I—I was a bit startled. Because, you know, you mustn't be disturbed by what just happened up there. Fever often causes these queer illusions. I've seen a man fight his own wife, calling her a tiger! Fancy that! So you see it's quite common, and you mustn't feel—er—hurt at anything an invalid may do."

"Don't worry. You're ready, Flower?"

Flower had listened open-mouthed.

"Just a second, Mr. Chris. I'll bring the car right round to the door."

As he started out to do so, his hand strayed to his coat pocket, where he carried his chief defense against the cold. Chris noticed the gesture and his unsteady walk.

"Cut out any more booze, Flower," he called. "I want to get there safe."

"Not another drop, I swear. I ain't had a drink since the little I took to welcome you back. Why, I wouldn't

think of drivin' a car a night like this 'less I was cold sober—cold"—he managed to put considerable pathos in the adjective—"cold sober."

"All right, then. Hurry up," cut in Chris.

He watched Flower lumber through the door, striking the frame with his heavy shoulder. Then he turned to the doctor.

"You don't want me to stay round here for anything special, do you?" he asked. "Is there any imminent danger?"

"Oh, no. And maybe it's just as well that you shouldn't go in to see him again, till his fever goes down. It's over a hundred and five. That's very serious, you know." The doctor rolled this serious symptom on his tongue as if it tasted rather pleasant to him. "But don't you worry," he concluded reassuringly. "Pneumonia needs watching, that's all. I wouldn't be at all afraid to handle this case alone, only your father himself proposed having the Chicago doctor, and you know what patients are. Confidence—all we need is confidence, but we must have that. The crisis won't be for a day or two, as far as I can reckon, and after that we shall have plain sailing. Here is the car." The toot of a horn ended his lecture.

In the light that streamed from the doorway, Chris saw Flower take a bottle from his lips and slip it swiftly out of sight. The soft thud of glass on the gravel told of its fate. For a moment Chris hesitated, thinking of Flower's clumsy exit through the door. Then he shrugged away all caution and got into the car.

Flower sagged at the wheel, and at the curves lurched heavily against Chris without attempting to right himself till the next curve did it for him.

It was a most unpleasant drive, what with the dark, the bitter cold, and Flower. As is the way with lovers, Chris made the very ugly discomfort of

it serve, through contrast, as a reminder of drives with Barbara—drives in the open sun over the Westchester hills.

Then suddenly he noticed the way Flower was cutting corners.

Flower was silent except for a highly colored and aggressive conversation he was holding disconnectedly with the wheel and the clutch, when his impetuous steering and freakish shifting of gears made the car peevish.

"I say, Flower," observed Chris at last, "I'm not fond of trick driving. Just keep steadily to the road, so we can have some chance of getting there."

"Oh, don' you fear, Kit. Don' you fear. Jush trus' me. I kin make this car *talk*—if I wanner. I kin maker walk up a wall—an'—an'—anythin'. You're ash shafe—"

He broke off into a sudden blaze of hair-raising profanity, pedaled madly, and threw himself violently upon the wheel. With what seemed to be a scream of terror, the car pounced forward directly upon a shrieking car of smaller size that had rounded the curve before them.

It seemed to Chris that it was about a week later that he dragged himself painfully in the dark along the frozen ground till he was free of the wreckage of the two machines.

"Flower!" he called, softly at first, as if he were afraid of waking some one.

When no answer came, he called louder, and then, in a sort of panic, at the top of his voice.

He thought he heard a groan and crawled on in that direction until he struck something heavy, but resisting and soft. It was cloth clad, evidently some one else knocked senseless in the collision—Flower or the driver of the other car.

He shook this person, who remained unresponsive. It occurred to Chris that shaking was not the proper treatment. He passed his hand inquiringly down

what seemed to be a sleeve and discovered that the arm in it was lying in some nightmare position, incompatible with any human construction.

His hand searched now with a sort of terrified curiosity across the arm to the breast. It struck something warmish and wet and came away swiftly, involuntarily, and trembling beyond control.

It took Chris over five minutes to light a match.

Staring up at him, out of the blood and grime, distorted, puffed, grossly changed, but unmistakable in the flare of the wind-sheltered flame, Chris beheld his own dead face.

Then blackness fell.

CHAPTER XVI.

Several times Chris had felt himself struggling vainly and with excruciating pain and terror to rise to consciousness. Each time he was smothered under a semisentient quiet. The last time, this came with a rather agreeable drowsiness and ended in sleep.

He woke in a strange, pleasant room. There was sun on the walls and filtering through the well-hung, simple curtains. He was in bed. His left hand and arm were neatly bandaged and the tightness of the bandage felt good.

Doctor Reed was standing in the doorway. His attention had evidently been attracted by the motion of Chris' head upon the pillow. His expression of worried expectancy changed instantly to one of professional optimism as he met the intelligence in Chris' eye.

"Good morning," he greeted cheerfully. "You're feeling quite yourself again?"

His words made a curious impression on Chris, who became aware of the possession of something he had not had yesterday; something he did not stop to define just now, though he felt vaguely enriched by it.

"Yes," he answered; and then, in the orthodox fashion, "Where am I?" he asked.

"Home, in bed."

So this was his room at the ranch! He had not seen it before. He looked about him with interest. And in the midst of his calm inspection of his surroundings came the realization that he was, considering all things, acting preposterously.

"Where is Flower? Was he hurt?"

His mind, now fully awake, was busy with questions he dared not voice—about one who was not Flower.

"Not as badly as he deserves," said the doctor griggishly. "Driving a car and risking the lives of others in that disgraceful state! His leg is fractured and his nose is broken. His leg is not badly fractured, either," he continued almost indigantly.

"And—and—was any one killed?"

The doctor hesitated, and then, seeming to realize that his hesitation was affirmation, made a virtue of his truthfulness.

"I'm afraid so. One of the men in the other car. But don't you worry over that. You weren't the slightest bit to blame. It was Flower's fault, and we can only hope it will be a lesson to him."

"I'm sorry," said Chris. Something within him made it physically impossible to ask for more news about the dead man who interested him so vitally. "Was the other man in their car hurt?"

"Not seriously. His head was cut pretty badly, but there is no real danger. He seems to have been in Flower's condition."

"Did—did you know—either of them?" At last Chris approximated what he wanted to say.

The doctor looked a little uneasy.

"I? No," he replied. "One is a chap from round here that they call 'Dolly.' That's the one who escaped death."

"And?"

"And now I'm going to send you up something to drink, and you must keep quiet and rest. You've had a shock, besides twisting your collar bone and bruising yourself all over. We've been feeding you on opium all night." And the doctor withdrew hastily.

Chris' unvoiced questions had been answered.

The doctor and probably all the others had seen what Chris had seen, ghastly and uncertain in the light of the match, the night before.

Chris lay back, shuddering, recalling the unforgettable picture. Then he sat up straight, abruptly, his eyes wide and his heart pounding.

For he knew the solution of the grew some mystery. His thoughts were clearing and blackness dissolved like a wet smudge in the sun.

He knew all that had gone before.

He knew that he was not Chris Ferrian!

He lay stunned, not so much by the memory of the old life as by the thought of the blank gap that separated it from the unbelievable present.

And now what?

He looked about the handsome room as if seeking for a means of escape from this new problem. He had no time now to think of the past. He must plan for the future.

Should he use his memory—that memory he was so much better off without?

Would he be forced to use it?

There was, too, a moral side to it. Moral! He dismissed this with a cynical laugh. Who was he to think of morals?

And, after all, he had rights, the best of rights. He had been brought up to consider his rights prior to those of Christopher Ferrian, junior's. His father might deny and ignore him and annul the marriage that had brought him into the world, but he was here in spite of his father and in spite of himself,

and every line of his face bespoke his blood claim, and his sturdy, clean-limbed body made a mad burlesque of his father's preference for the younger son.

With a keen feeling for the theatric, his mother had never allowed him to call himself Chester Ferrian, though he was legally entitled to that name. She wished to make the worst of his father's refusal to acknowledge him and of the law that permitted it, although it had been unable to prevent him from bearing the features of the Ferrians in a manner that had deceived their nearest friends—and Barbara.

His heart leaped. He was *not* Barbara's cousin.

Then his heart sank. He had no right to her friendship. Not only that, but Chester Moreau, the nameless actor, the convicted gambler, the escaped convict, could never dare to dream that he might meet Miss Prentiss at all.

That settled it. There was but one conclusion.

Chester Moreau had been killed in last night's accident. Chris Ferrian was putting himself to a lot of needless worry trying to dispose of him.

A knock at the door broke his train of thought. It was a servant bringing him the coffee the doctor had ordered for him.

CHAPTER XVII.

About half an hour later, the doctor came into the room again. Chester's alert, suspicious eye noted an agitation in his manner, and this hint of danger had its effect in strengthening his purpose to carry his deception through successfully. But the doctor's first words showed that his mind was on other matters.

"The Chicago doctor—Doctor Ward—came last night," he began uncertainly. "I—I'm afraid he's not going to be able to be of much help. Your father wants to see you, and you'd better

come right along. Don't stop to dress. This will do."

His father!

He had forgotten that antipathy which his father had manifested, through pain and weakness, toward his elder son's intrusion. Here was the first and greatest stumblingblock.

Yet he dared not refuse to answer his father's summons. It would tell against him later, should a doubt ever arise. He must take a chance. The thought was bracing to the gambler within him.

The doctor helped him into his dressing gown, a painful proceeding, and, leaning heavily upon the doctor's arm, he left the room.

"Is he very ill?" Chester asked.

The doctor interpreted the emotion in the son's voice as the latter intended him to.

"Well," he said, in the measured tone of one going through a difficult situation and priding himself on keeping his head cool, "he's pretty ill. But I have seen worse."

The Chicago doctor was a tall, lean, well-dressed man with irreproachable manners and the cultured voice of a good actor. He greeted Chester at the door of the sick room with just the proper discouragement in his face and tone. Chester did not appreciate these details just then. He was preparing for another outburst from the spent white figure on the bed.

His father's hollow eyes fixed themselves upon him. The pupils were greatly distended and seemed possessed of an odd gray luminosity. It was hard to believe that they saw what was before them.

"Kit," he said faintly, "my—boy! I'm—glad—you came." And then, after an interval of heavy breathing, during which Chester knelt stiffly beside the bed, hiding his lowered face, "We'll—we'll go—home—together—Kit."

The perception of the double meaning in that sentence choked Chester.

Then, quite against his belief or will, he became filled with pity and tenderness. This was his father. The love he was taking so falsely was his by every right of nature. He had been taught to feel the need of a father that he might the more bitterly and mercilessly hate him for his neglect. But now he sensed a new need. He realized that he had been robbed of something greater than mere worldly advantage. He had been deprived of something even more important than his father's care for him—his care for his father.

"Father!" he whispered huskily. The word broke on his lips and he hid his face in the coverlet.

He felt his father's heavy fingers fumble for an instant with his hair.

"We'll—go—home—together—Kit," His father's voice trailed into silence.

Doctor Ward helped Chester gently to his feet and led him to a couch at the other end of the room.

"Lie here," he said, and the nurse arranged pillows and an afghan for him. "We'll call you if you're needed again."

He must have dozed.

When they called him, his father could no longer recognize any one. Only a short while after, the crisis passed into a complete collapse.

He had made good his plan and had gone home with the son he loved.

As Chester watched them draw the sheet up over the quiet face, he experienced the painful thrill of an honest man who has cheated at cards and won beyond his wildest dreams or extremest needs. He shuddered and covered his eyes. Back in his mind was a childish belief in the omniscience of the dead. Somehow that long, white, covered figure seemed to be staring accusingly into his very heart.

Doctor Ward patted him sympathetically on the back.

"Come, come," he said. "You mustn't take it too hard. Try to lie

down and rest. You've been under a severe strain. You must bear up. You've got your duty and position to think of now."

The words were not calculated to make Chester feel less mean, but they braced him. He realized that he must see the game through now.

Luck smoothed the way for him, but the next day he met his first drawback. Everly announced to him that Dolly sought an interview with him and had pointedly declared that it must be private. Chester saw it was best to allay the lawyer's suspicions by taking the chance of insisting on his presence. So Dolly was led into the big hall, where Chester sat in an easy-chair on one side of the fire, with Everly seated opposite to him, inscrutably placid in face and manner.

Dolly, drunk, but whole, at the saloon had been anything but attractive. Dolly, badly battered, bandaged, and much in need of a shave, needed only the ingratiating leer on his pasty face and the arrogant hostility of his bearing to make him one of the most repulsive spectacles Chester had ever seen.

"Ah," said the lawyer, when the servant had been dismissed. "You have something to say to Mr. Ferrian?"

"Yes, but it's for Mr. Ferrian alone," answered Dolly belligerently.

"I am his lawyer. You may say anything you wish in front of me," said Everly suavely.

"That's what you say," grunted Dolly contemptuously. "How about you?" He looked at Chester. "I guess you know what I'm goin' to say well enough. Do you want me to spit it all out in front of him?"

"I don't know what you are going to say," answered Chester calmly. "But I should suggest that your manner might be improved. If that is possible, and you know something that might help me to recover the memory of the past few

months, I shall be delighted to listen to it, and so, no doubt, will Mr. Everly."

"Waal, I'm sorry you don't like my manners. They suit me. As for your past," drawled Dolly, "I know damn' little about that. I only know about Mr. Christopher Ferrian's past."

"You mean to say that you do not think I am Chris Ferrian." Chester managed to smile easily and patiently, as one correcting a rather willfully stupid child.

"I know you're not. He was killed in my car by your car, the night before last, and you know it jest as well as I do."

Chester turned quickly to Everly.

"What does he mean?" he demanded.

Everly cleared his throat.

"There was a man in his car that—in a sort of a way—bore a slight resemblance to you. It seems quite likely that this man—hearing of your loss of memory—posed as you and took Dolly in."

Chester's pallor was quite in character.

"I—remember," he said haltingly. "Then it wasn't an hallucination! I remember striking a match and—and seeing—a—a—face. But—it was not really like me. At least, it seemed—in that brief look I got of it, to be what I might imagine myself to be in some fearful nightmare. It was the face of a degenerate—a tramp. Who was it? Do you know?" He appealed to the lawyer, and his voice shook under the strain he was enduring.

"It was Chris Ferrian," replied Dolly doggedly. "I wasn't taken in. He says it was all youse was taken in. He says this feller, here, is a illegitimate half brother, 'tradin' on the fact he looked like Chris, an'—"

"Wait, wait!" cried Chester, and then, naively, to Everly again. "Have I a half brother?"

The lawyer pursed his lips.

"The real Chris Ferrian, to the best



of my knowledge, was unaware of the existence of his half brother. Therefore, since the half brother was, on the contrary, familiar with his relationship to the Ferrian family, it looks exceedingly much as if the dead man had proved *himself* to be the half brother he was denouncing with such evident purpose and with so clearly perceived a desire for gain. This, my man, is a most ridiculous story."

"You mean——" But Chester had not the nerve to finish the sentence. He let his expression of horror speak for him and added, "But how did he hope to deceive my father?"

"He was probably—pardon my heartlessness in saying it—he was undoubtedly hoping that your father would never have the chance of seeing you together. Let us hear your full statement," he continued, to Dolly. "This is a grave charge and needs clearing, even though it seems to us to be absurd. What makes you think it was Chris Ferrian?"

"He said he was in San Francisco when he heard about it all, an' I told ye

there was a cow-puncher here last year that *seen* him there last summer. I tol' ye two days ago, now didn't I?"

"Yes. You told us, too, that he was seen in an opium den. Do you know the effect of that drug—the dreams it inspires? And did the man say this young dope fiend said he was Christopher Ferrian or did he merely boast that he was the son of Christopher Ferrian? That is rather important."

"I dunno what the feller in the dope den said, but I do know that Chris Ferrian, in my car the other night, told me, black on white, that he was Chris Ferrian."

Dolly showed the effect of the lawyer's pointed attack by speaking more obstinately, but with the loss of some of his braggadocio.



With what seemed a scream of terror, the car pounced forward directly upon a shrieking car of smaller size that had rounded the curve before them.

"Have you ever seen Chris Ferrian?"

"Of course I seen him! *He* wasn't too stuck up to blow to drinks now and again."

"How many times did you see him? Please be accurate."

"How in hell should I know? Mebbe two or three."

"And always when he was, as you so

delightfully put it, 'blowing' you to drinks. Now how far do you suppose a jury would trust your powers of recognition? Especially as the other night, when you identified him with such interesting completeness, you were—ah—shall we put it mildly and say 'intoxicated'?"

Dolly glowered under the lawyer's

sarcasm. He was handicapped by not knowing exactly what to curse.

"It was him," he burst out at last.

"It is to your advantage to believe that," smiled the lawyer. "But let us get right to the bottom of it. Did he recall any previous meeting with you, or was it you who did the recalling?"

"I dunno," growled Dolly.

"Did he tell you any sort of a connected story?"

"Sure he did. He says he was in Frisco when he heard about his paw bein' took sick, an' he seen in the papers as how they sent for his son from Noo York or somewheres, an' he thinks to himself: 'Hell! Who's this damn' four-flusher that's makin' out he's me?' An' he had to hustle round an' borrry money to git out here. He was so down an' out nobody'd trust him till he tol' 'em all about it, an' jest to get the best of the skunk that was double-crossin' him, a lot of 'em pooled his expenses. They wasn't none of them goin' to stand for no high-handed claim jumper like that, from outer the woods, without no mem'ry—huh!"

"Aha, now we have it!" exclaimed the lawyer. "They were banking on that loss of memory. A bold and talented plan, worthy of the youth who, at twenty, was sent up for a daring crime. That was your half brother—a confirmed criminal. He broke jail about six years ago and was accounted dead. No trace of him was ever found, but it looks as if we had come upon a clew. It's just as well for him that he was killed as he was. One last question, Dolly: Did he give you any documentary evidence of his identity—papers, jewelry, property of any sort?"

"He was down an' out, I tol' ye, before they staked him to his trip here. He didn't have *nothin'*. It was all stolen off of him or sold or somethin'." All the defiance and cocksureness had gone out of Dolly's tone. He descended to irritation.

"Ah, ver-y interesting coincidence!"

It was all Dolly could bear. He stood deflated, rather more piteous than contemptible, though a mixture of both, under the lawyer's cynical eye.

"And now," continued Everly, with cold brutality, "just what was your motive in wishing to see Mr. Ferrian alone? The penalty for blackmail——"

That night and for several nights after, Chester was haunted by the vision of Dolly's revolting, wilted figure, shrinking under the pelting cruelty of the lawyer's reprimand.

So Dolly was disposed of.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Chester took his father's body back East to bury it in the family plot. He left the disposal of that other to the lawyer, who promised to see that such persons as were interested might be promptly notified.

"I believe," said Everly, with discreet reserve, "that his mother is still living."

Chester could trust himself to no more than a constrained nod. He had reason to believe that the mother of Chester Moreau would not be overcome with grief when they told her the whole story.

Luck rode brightly at Chester's side all the way home. The lawyer, far from being suspicious, seemed almost purposefully gullible. He was the accomplice rather than the detective. A few days later, when the will was opened, Chester found an excellent reason for this. If Everly did suspect for a moment that he was championing the wrong Chris, he was consciously or unconsciously influenced by what he knew of the will to believe that it was the right one. Ferrian had left a hundred thousand dollars and a house to Barbara. All the rest of his great fortune went to his son, and Everly was placed in charge of this at a substantial retainer, to guard it until Chris had at-

tained the age of thirty-five years. If, however, Ferrian outlived his son, all the money was to go to Barbara without any incumbrance.

Barbara met them at the Grand Central Station, and when Chester beheld her, pale, quiet, and black clad, the shining image of his luck began to fade. Decency forbade him to kiss her this time, knowing all he knew. To make it harder, she blushed at his handshake. The truth was that she had planned to meet him with candid, sisterly affection. Something altered, older, graver in his manner showed her that he was no longer the irresponsible boy she had known, nor even the charmingly dependent man she had been able to regard with motherly tenderness. The present change in him stirred something in her that startled her. It was rather like that strange elation that had followed his good-by kiss.

Constraint grew up between them and gained in power as the days went on. It took the form of making them speak with great politeness on inane topics that interested neither of them. When they got back to Ossining, they both found relief in the visits of sympathizing friends and neighbors, or even in the presence of the servants. Chester fled from being alone with her, but, away from her, found himself miserable with a longing to be near her again.

Coming home together in the car from the funeral was the first time they spoke with any real intimacy. Barbara told Chester her plan of visiting a girlhood chum the following week.

"For long?" asked Chester in dismay.

"Till some one else asks me," smiled Barbara. "You see," she explained quickly, "now that uncle is no longer there, it is impossible for me to stay with you in Ossining in that house."

"I don't see—— You stayed with me before!" exclaimed Chester.

"But—that was different. In the

first place, uncle was supporting me. And you know"—this was before the will was read—"I am poor. There would be talk."

"Let any one dare!" he began furiously.

"What would Kit Ferrian do?" It was the first time bitterness for his past had ever crept into her tone. "And besides——"

But she did not finish. She lacked the courage to tell him that his very desire to keep her with him was the main reason why she must go.

"Barbara——" Chester choked back a desire to confess to her all his villainy; on the heels of this good intention had come the resolve to seize this opportunity to make the best of the game so crookedly and so successfully begun. "Barbara—I told you I—I had been married and that I wanted to find her again. Well—I've wanted to let you know—Everly told me—that I'm free. She's married. And there really was no child, and—and—Barbara, you know why it all seemed so hard to do——"

His voice had sunk into a strained, hoarse whisper.

"Please—Kit—please!" begged Barbara in a panic, thrusting out her hands as if to shield her tear-filled eyes from his. "Not now!" For it seemed to have come almost as an answer to her words, and she could not bear the remotest thought of having led him on.

He pulled himself up and stared out of the window. He was aware of a timidity in her voice, an uncertainty. Something told him that he had only to plead, to be more importunate, to tell her tenderly that he could not wait for his reply. That was the voice of his luck. Then the decency that had denied him the kiss suddenly silenced him at the moment when he might have spoken most effectively.

Late that night, in her own room, with vivid cheeks, Barbara shamed her-

self for wishing that he had not obeyed her command to be still.

Barbara's problem was much simplified by her uncle's will, but Chester's was deeply involved.

At his worst, it must be said of Chester that he was cheating for higher stakes than money. This was, perhaps, because he had been brought up to feel the lack of social position, though he had never been in actual need of cash. By the will, he was defrauding Barbara of her fortune. If he were to marry her to make it right, he would be going the limit of caddishness. He would be marrying her for her money and social position in a manner that would convey to her that he was bestowing both upon her. It might have been excellent diplomacy, but somehow the gambler within him repudiated it.

The house Barbara had inherited was in Pelham, and for the remainder of the week they were together. She would drive Chester over in the car and they would spend hours discussing plans for decorating and furnishing it. It was a safe topic over which they even dared to get friendly enough to quarrel at times.

Sometimes Barbara's innocent calculations as to what she could afford nearly drove Chester mad. In setting out upon a career of imposture, he had made the primary, unpardonable error of falling in love with a nice girl. All the good in him gathered to harass him. He was extremely unhappy.

Barbara wondered at the continuation of his reserve. Was it their cousinship that stood in the way? She herself would encamp behind her belief that she was against their marriage on that ground, but in her heart she was not deceived. She began to find his unhappiness contagious. She was glad they were going to separate soon. When she saw less of him, she would probably forget him, and he would go back to his old way of life.

Only she hoped he wouldn't go back to his old way of life. And she hoped he wouldn't—well—entirely forget her.

The end of the week came as a relief to both. Barbara went gayly to stay with her chum in New York. Chester remained alone in the big, empty house.

The first night he spent alone, smoking before the fire and reconstructing her figure in the chair opposite him. He found his tongue unlocked to this phantom Barbara. There were hundreds of things to say, things remote from love and forbidden topics, things that would interest her. And he could recount them with such a delicious fluency. Why had he been so dumb and stupid in her presence? He decided to write to her.

He had written several pages before he realized that she must not see his formed and regular handwriting. He tossed the letter into the fire. So was he hoist with his own petard.

The next day he spent driving lonesomely about in the little car which she had used so much and which she believed she had taught him to drive. He found peace out on the open gray roads, under the falling leaves of November, speeding against frosty winds, rising high out of wooded valleys upon sunny hills with the sweep of cultivated country below him. He would stop to gather the flickering hazel wands she was so fond of, or branches of thick, satiny oak leaves.

And here again he conjured her up beside him and talked to her freely, incessantly—as he had not been able to talk when she had been really there.

That night Doctor Finch came out to see him. With his usual kindly air of paternal solicitude, he led the conversation along the lines of a possible return of memory. It got to be very uncomfortable. Once, when the doctor was discussing the election they had just passed through, Chester, in defense

of the other candidate, brought up an historical fact. A flicker of the doctor's eye told him of his break, which he covered later by declaring that he had been reading up election literature. On the whole, the doctor's company was a bit of a strain.

The next day it rained, and late in the afternoon, to save his reason, Chester went to town. He hunted up Peyton, who was not to be found, and then spent a dull evening with some old friends of the family, who felt it their duty to look unreconciled to Chester's loss.

The next day—a crisp, bright day, filled with the scent of burning leaves—on a road plugged with frozen puddles, Chester let his car head toward Pelham. There were some workmen at the house, but she was not going to be there that day. On his way back, Chester made up his mind to call upon her at her chum's house that night.

But when he got to New York that night, he balked at the definite rascality of what that call would lead to.

He decided to put in the evening with Peyton, if he could get in touch with him, and to that end entered a cigar store to phone.

"One of those wild nights Peyton tells about ought to help me forget," he thought desperately and without enthusiasm.

At the counter, lighting a cigar, stood Hig. Beside him there lounged a long-legged young man with a drawling voice and attentive gray eyes.

"Why, hel-lo!" welcomed Hig. "It's good to meet you. Got anything to do to-night?"

The gambler in Chester took what luck sent him.

"No," he answered. "Why?"

"Well, this is a friend of mine—Morrison. He's an engineer back from the dizzy wilds of Canada. He's outward bound on another woodland job and wants to spend a gay night in New

York before he goes. He's crazy to get up to the Electrical Show. That's his idea of a good time. I've promised to steer him. Want to go along and keep me company while he gossips with the dynamoes?"

Morrison's serene eyes were watching Chester openly. There was something almost healing in their quiet. Here was a man anchored to real life, real living.

"Sure," said Chester. "I'm with you."

It was Morrison's evening. Chester went home teeming with undigested information concerning things that had never interested him before, but he was happier than he had been in many days.

CHAPTER XIX.

The next morning Chester lay abed looking through his window to where the bare branches of a giant maple lashed against the cold, leaden sky. He was thinking of Morrison. For it was literally true that the Electrical Show had been a form of dissipation to Morrison. Electricity was a side interest of his, a play toy for his leisure, when he would experiment in it "merely for the sport" as he had said. His calling was civil engineering, and he had told tales of his adventures, when they had gone for supper afterward—stories of the laying of roads and the building of bridges in woods and wastes.

Woods!

The word itself possessed a sort of clean freedom Chester longed for. He wondered what his life in the woods had been like. Surely there had been something fine in it that it was so powerfully calling him to return—to liberty, to honesty, without problems, responsibilities, nor needs. To be merely an animal? Perhaps. But as an animal, he would at least be innocent of the discontented hypocrisy he called living now.

Then Parker entered with his coffee and his mail.

There was a letter from Barbara, asking him to meet her Monday at Pelham, as she needed his advice about the house. She added that she would be free to lunch with him if he cared to have her.*

The wood magic was completely dispelled.

He had to suppress the desire to write to her fully his delight in this invitation. He reached for the phone and sent her a night letter, and because he was deeply moved and did not want central to guess it, his wording was stilted and meager.

Then came a phone message from Peyton asking him to lunch in the city at their club. It opened a new field for him. He had entirely overlooked the possibility that Chris Ferrian belonged to a club! It was Saturday, and his main idea was to pass the time until Monday's lunch date, and luck seemed to be supplying him with an excellent means of doing so. But luck did more.

It took them, after lunch, into the club card room, where the members greeted Chester heartily and invited him to join them.

"Yes, I'd like to," said Chester, to Peyton's carefully repressed astonishment and delight.

Peyton had no desire to convey his amazement to Chester, lest it would disturb his memory, but his joy in discovering one familiar trait in his old chum could not be hidden.

"Chris is coming round," he reported gleefully to his other friends. "Good old Chris! This is something like!"

Time passed so swiftly and pleasantly with cards to speed it that Chester was glad to accept when Peyton proposed an all-night game at his house Sunday night. And Peyton, sure of the return of the "good old Chris" he had loved, laid in a generous supply of liquor "to lubricate the game."

Barbara read into the night letter a cooling of Chester's love. She had referred to her cousin's "crush" rather lightly to her chum, hoping the latter would mock her out of all seriousness. They discussed his dispatch together, and the chum looked grave.

"My dear," said the chum, "that's all over, unless you can teach him to remember how to write. The Western Union has quenched his passion. Babs, you must be deceiving me. This is not love. This is a grocer's clerk thanking you for an order."

Barbara laughed and congratulated herself at being truly amused at her friend's nonsense. If there were no bitterness in her laughter, surely she was quite safe and heartwhole.

The next day she waited an hour in the empty, chilly house that resounded so hollowly to the hammering of the workmen, but no Chris appeared. She stood it, fortifying herself with a sustained and cynical little smile on her lips at her own folly. Then, suddenly, she fled to one of the vacant rooms upstairs and, closing the door carefully, gave way to a passionate burst of tears, back of which she perceived something deeper than disappointment and more painful than anger.

Peyton's card party had been an hilarious affair. Drinking had been so much in order, Peyton and his friends had been so genially insistent, that Chester, who had drunk a little at the club without any ill effects the day before, outdid himself. While Barbara waited in vain for him at Pelham, he lay in Peyton's guest room, sleeping it off.

That night Chester sought Barbara at her chum's house and insisted upon seeing her. He was ill, befuddled with headache, crushed with remorse, but suddenly determined to do what he felt he had shirked too long.

At last he had found a righteous mo-



Chester Moreau, perched thus between earth and heaven, for the fourth time read the letter that had been handed to him that night at supper.

tive to help him. For it is not true that we slay our consciences when we make up our minds to do wrong. We do what is far more deadly and sinful. We educate them to believe that we are acting for the best. Chester argued that he was in danger of falling into dissipation and evil from which Barbara alone could save him. This of itself gave him the right to seek Barbara's help.

She parted the curtains at the other end of the long, awkward, old-fash-

ioned New York drawing-room and came toward him, pale and unsmiling. There was no coquettishness in her reproach. She herself could hardly have said how deeply he had offended her.

At the first sight of her, he could only think that it was nearly a week since they had met; in that time she seemed to have grown lovelier and yet a stranger to him. For a brief instant, it crossed his mind that she knew of his imposture, and during that interval he

realized something of the depth of his own infamy and began to doubt the righteousness of his purpose in coming to her.

So he stood before her, dumb and miserable, yet feverishly aware that every minute passed in her presence was beyond price.

"Barbara," he began huskily at last, "I'm not going to make any excuse. I'm going to tell you just what it was that kept me from the happiness I did not deserve. And I'm going to ask you—beg you—to help me to prevent the repetition—"

He stopped dead. Her eyes, uncannily bright, seemed to pierce through his heart.

"Chris——" She seemed to find the answer to the question she was scarcely able to breathe in the lines on his tired face and the bleared look in his eyes. "Oh, Kit! You haven't gone back to that again!"

He realized, then, that he was reaping as he had sown. In wrongfully inheriting his brother's wealth and leisure, he had not failed to acquire all that had gone with it for that other—sin, waste, and loss; above all, the loss of Barbara's trust and respect.

It was worse than if she had indeed condemned him for what he really was.

Her eyes seemed to have grown dim, having lost the look he had so cherished there. He had quenched the light that was to have guided him.

He perceived that if he could not stand without her, he could not have her. Seeing this, he was a man new made.

"Barbara," he said very quietly, "can a man live down his past?"

"It seems," she answered bitterly, "there is but one way—to forget it. You have recovered your memory?"

"Yes," he replied, "all of it."

"I am sorry."

"Is that true, Barbara? Do you believe a man without a memory—half a

man—is better than one who is wide awake to all his danger and his weakness? A man who can profit by what went before and can *will* to forget?"

"But what can I say?" cried Barbara desperately.

"That is true. The answer is with me. Barbara"—he approached her and took both her hands—"look closely at me. Am I a different man from the one you left in Ossining a week ago?"

Her eyes searched his face with a level, anxious look, and after a moment he closed his own eyes to hide the look he could not repress. But his failure to meet her gaze did not lead her to distrust him—on the contrary, for in one radiant flash of happiness she had understood.

"You are the same," she said in a deep, tremulous voice. "Somehow you have put the old Chris far behind you."

"Barbara——"

But he could say no more. Abruptly he freed her hands and turned from her. He moved blindly toward the door.

"Good-by," he mumbled, his back to her, his hand on the doorknob.

"Good-by, Kit," she answered gently.

"No!" He turned around swiftly. "Just say, 'Good-by,' and—and let's forget I ever was Chris Ferrian."

"Good-by," she repeated obediently, and smiled with shining eyes.

He stood for a moment at the door as if he had more to say. Then suddenly and swiftly he was gone.

CHAPTER XX.

THREE HILLS, Colorado,

April 11, 19—.

DEAR BARBARA: I can't begin this letter in any other way. I think of you as "Barbara," as I have known you. "Miss Prentiss" is not your name to me and can never be, even if you deny me your friendship. This is a letter of all truth and I must begin it truthfully.

I didn't read the papers after I told Everly everything. I don't know what they said about me. Nor have I dared to think how the ugly imposture must have colored your feeling toward me. Until now, it has been a torture to think of you, and yet I can think of no one else.

This week I earned the right, through some little success in my work and the friendly commendation of Morrison, to let you hear from me. This is the fifth letter I've started to you. I'm going to try to condense all the others and to cut out everything that isn't important. But I want you to read this through and try to be patient with me. This is the long story I have planned to forget.

Christopher Ferrian, your uncle, married Angele Moreau, my mother, when he was eighteen, and she was about a year older. She was the daughter of a widowed French teacher who found life so hard that she made home unbearable for her daughter by taking to drink or opium. My mother went on the stage, in the chorus, at fifteen. She had youth, a vivid personality, good looks, a fair voice, and nothing much in the way of ethical tradition. At eighteen she was singing fairly good rôles, in road companies. At nineteen, she had leads. My father met her in New Orleans, and after following her about for three months, threw his family into a convulsion by marrying her. I don't think my mother was keen on the marriage, but when the Ferrians started to attack its legality, she grew obstinate. As she tells of it, it is an ugly story. She claims she was defeated by money and power against the will of her young husband. When he married again, two years after the annulment, she declares he was coerced. Perhaps she planned that my birth should influence matters in her favor. When it didn't, she felt she had a real grievance.

But after several unsuccessful and

expensive attempts to get what she considered my rights, my mother gave up the legal fight and returned to the stage. She was embittered, but became too interested in her profession, and too busy, to be blighted. She never remarried, holding to her claim that the annulment of her marriage was a fraud.

From my earliest days, she taught me that I had been cheated out of my heritage. Law and justice were carefully differentiated for me. But though I was made to hold all courts in contempt, my deadliest scorn was directed toward my weakling father and his recognized, but—according to my mother—illegitimate son.

Even when she herself had long outgrown the injury, she kept up this unflagging semblance of hate, though all real emotion of this sort had died in her. And her ill-directed zeal had the natural effect of making me conceited, lazy, and lacking in initiative.

I grew up in a haphazard fashion. At times I was boarded out and neglected. At other times, I lived in garish hotels with my mother, and was given too much and too noisy attention by every one. Later, I was sent to boarding schools, all fashionable, so that I might be educated according to my station. To this end, my mother was abnormally careful of my speech and "manners" and trained me to speak French, her mother's tongue, because she considered it genteel. She also encouraged me to spend my vacations with my schoolmates, and in this way I got to see something of real home life, for which I longed as an ordinary boy would have coveted the life of travel and change that was mine. Whenever I suggested that my mother should establish a home for us, she would answer with some renewed invective against my father and declare that she could not afford it. This was not true. My mother lived extravagantly and loved her gypsy existence.

I have before me a watch—a big, clumsy, chased affair that my father had given her in his days of courtship. I remember it in connection with all these bursts of passionate denunciation of him. My mother promised to give it to me on my twenty-first birthday—my fortune, she called it sarcastically. She kept it locked away in an old jewel box with a lot of broken and useless jewelry, and she never wound it. I remember thinking it hideous when I was old enough to compare it with the slim, delicate watches of my school friends, and I think I rather dreaded owning it.

As I look back, I can see how that watch typified my mother's feeling toward my father—something that had run down long ago, an encumbrance rather than a possession, hoarded for the sole purpose of handing it down to his son. I saw my father only twice. Both times he was so ill that little of his real character remained in him. Yet something passed from him to me in that last interview that makes me glad now to keep and use his watch.

I left school when I was fifteen, and joined my mother's company as assistant props and filler of small parts, mostly valets and butlers. That's how I came to be such a treasure in Hig's employ, I suppose. When I was about nineteen, I fell in with a man, a bit older, named Barney Kerrigan. He was a professional gambler who had drifted into scene shifting when luck turned against him. I had tasted most of the vices pretty liberally since I had left school, and some of them before, but, perhaps for the same reason that I hungered for home life, I found them monotonous and unsatisfying. All but gambling. All I can offer in extenuation is that, though I knew most of the regular card-sharp tricks, I never resorted to them. My mother kept me well supplied with money and perhaps that kept me straight.

Barney liked me and flattered me by

telling me I had personality. He planned to run a stylish and exclusive gambling "club" in New York City, if I could get the money. Of course, mother gave me enough to start things, especially as I was crazy to live in New York.

When we had been running along for about six months, a reform wave struck the New York police department. We were raided. The lights went out when the detectives came in, there was some shooting, and two of us got hit. One was a police officer and the other was I. Due to that plug in my leg, I was the only one who didn't make a safe get-away. And there was a gun with several of its chambers discharged sitting companionably beside me.

I was made an example of. The officer had not been wounded even as badly as I had, and I had not really fired a single shot. But there was no proving it, and somebody had to be the goat. I got twenty years! And I wasn't much more than nineteen years old!

No wonder I almost remembered the Ossining station when everything else was a blank to me.

After two unspeakable years, I escaped. I was one of a gang that managed it, and I shall never know how the others made out. I was shot by a guard and hunted through woods and swamps. I stole food from people's gardens and clothes from their lines and their scarecrows to replace my barbarous uniform. I rode under the cars, as tramps do, and drifted hither and thither all that summer, scarcely daring to exchange a word with a human soul for fear of being caught and sent back to jail.

One day, in what must have been the hunting season, I was wandering about the woods when I heard a shot. It scared me so that I ran, aimlessly and unreasoningly, like a gun-shy dog, and I ran into my salvation.

I shall never know what really hap-

pened, but I must have tripped and dropped down a cliff. A blow on the head cut five years out of my life. Reason assists me to remember, or to think I remember, certain things. I must have had shelter and clothing or I should have died from exposure in the long winters, so I imagine I can recall a warm, dark, smoky cave, and people of the village leaving old blankets and clothing and food around for me. In those years, I touched the low-water mark of human degradation. I can even faintly recollect the voices of children, taunting me with the name of "wild man." If you have ever seen the hermits who have earned that name, you can guess the depths of filth and imbecility I must have sunk to. I must have had a second fall that restored my senses, though not my memory, the day I strolled into Hig's camp in search of fire.

My memory came back the night of the auto accident in Montana. It was then I deliberately planned to take by falsehood what I had been taught all my life had been mine by right. Barbara, can you believe me when I tell you that I could not see the enormity of my wrongdoing? I planned, so blithely, how you should lose nothing of your property, and then I could not seem to sink low enough to carry out my plan. I tried that night I went to see you in New York. And then I saw what a crooked game I was playing, and I lost my nerve.

Do you remember the lady so terribly perfumed that came to see me at Ossining? I thought for a while she was the woman I had to marry. I went to that woman directly after leaving you that night. She was my mother.

Small wonder she recalled to me the wrong of annulled marriage, and no wonder I was so sure I had a child, for the son I insisted I remembered was no other than my own self.

I had been reported dead five years

before, after their failure to recapture me. She had seen Chris Ferrian in San Francisco that summer, and, on his reported return, came up to have a look at him. She was satisfied when she saw me, for, motherlike, she had never believed that I had been killed. It must have been a strange interview for her, all triumph and renunciation, for she knew that in giving me my "rightful position," she must sacrifice all claim to me. And she seemed honestly to believe that God had arranged it all and that I would never be found out!

When I told her that I was going to become Chester Moreau again, it struck her as blasphemy. She even tried to frighten me out of it by bringing up the fact of my unfinished prison term. But she had not the heart to plead that long, knowing what she knew. And, Barbara, here I must confess to the lowest weakness. I had planned to kill myself rather than go back to jail. But Barney Kerrigan, about to enlist in the European War, had sent a statement to my mother that he, not I, had done the shooting. He did it as a sort of recompense to her, never dreaming it would be of any use to me, since he, too, considered me dead.

Doctor Finch and Hig did the rest. They are the two best friends a man could have, except Morrison. Morrison is a civil engineer, a man I had met once through Hig. He is heading the construction of a road bonded by Hig's firm. After Hig and Finch had fixed up my prison affairs with the governor, Hig and Morrison got me out here under the latter to make good on this job.

And I'm going to, Barbara.

Morrison is teaching me in the evenings, and says I can finish up with a year at the University of Wisconsin, so that I can do work in his line. Learning is easy. Mathematics means something out here, where you see it swinging girders, slicing up hills, plumbing waters, and stretching out mile after

mile of road for people to ride over and for little towns to come to life upon. For the first time in my life, I can see the work of my hands and the use of my senses.

I know you will be glad to hear all this of me. You will be glad only because you want all men to be the best there is in them and not because it is I.

I have found the best way of forgetting the past, as you wanted me to forget it. It is much more effective than a knock-out blow. Somehow an odd little line of poetry that I learned at school, and that lives in my mind all by itself, comes to me often and often when I think of you. It runs:

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting.

I sing it over and over and keep telling myself that I have been reborn.

And, oh, the open woods in April, dear!

I can't cross that out, Barbara, though I meant not to write it once, not till I am something more to you than the dark shadow of another man. Sometimes my dream overwhelms me by its bright magnitude. Forgive me this. For if I am to forget the past, I must forget it utterly and bury it in the graves of my dead ancestors. That which was the gambler in him who is now gone, holding him to petty vices and great incompetence, raises me, his descendant, to compete with torrents and rocks. I see in the growth of the work we are doing the winning of the biggest game in the world.

Barbara, I shan't even ask you to answer, but only that you will let me write to you, once in a while, when I am uplifted and happy as I am now.

So—just good-by, till you let me write again.

Barbara!

CHESTER MOREAU.

CHAPTER XXI.

Two weeks later, the long, ruddy sunset of late April filtered through the new-leaved trees across a deep gorge upon the bare head of one who sat perilously on the end of an unpainted girder, swung many feet above a rushing, noisy little stream.

Chester Moreau, perched thus between earth and heaven, for the fourth time read the letter that had been handed to him that night at supper.

DEAR CHESTER: In Ossining I came to know and care about a man who was not Chris Ferrian. Something running through your letter recalled his image to me. Is he out there, with Morrison, playing the biggest game in the world? I wonder.

And I'm coming out to see. Flower has left the ranch, and I am needed in Montana, so I leave here next week. I shall go by way of Colorado, and shall manage to stop off to find Three Hills, and—Morrison.

Oh, Chester, you are not the only one who is happy, dear—to forget! BARBARA.

When the last bit of color had faded and the dusk came on, Chester crept back along the slim-hung shaft of steel and sought the woods that bordered the chasm. Here it was very dark and redolent of late spring flowers. Now and then the cracking of a bough under his feet stirred awake some drowsy bird or wary groundling.

He came to a small, wood-bound lake, no more than the broad bowl of a spring, only wide enough to thin the vaulted branches of the trees above, so that the early stars shone down upon him.

He stood very still with his head upraised to the sweet, cool night, and the soft tinkle of water made music for the singing in his heart.

"Barbara!" he whispered at last, to all the beauty in all the world. "Barbara! Barbara!"

THE END.

Paper Cuffs

By Samuel Raphaelson

ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. CASWELL

A business story by a writer new to the pages of SMITH'S.

TO Irving C. Cahane, office manager of the agricultural-implement department, came Myrtle Porter, typist, pale-faced, cold-eyed, with a request. She voiced it with the combined deference and defiance that characterized employees of the Mammoth Mail Order House.

"Could I get off this afternoon, please?" she said. "I got to go to the funeral of a relation."

"Certainly," said Irving, and reached for a printed blank. "What relation to you is this person?" he quoted from the insolent questions.

"My mother," answered Myrtle, and patted her overelaborate hair.

Her voice was indifferent, her face impassive. Irving stared at her.

"Your mother?" he said.

"Yes, sir," with another pat.

The next question:

"What was the cause of her death?"

Myrtle hesitated. When she had entered the office, she had forgotten about these "third-degree" blanks, as the Mammoth employees called them. As she stood there, looking at the well-groomed, averted head of the manager, she felt for a moment like stamping her foot in annoyance. She could have pleaded a headache, and taken a chance on a "home verdict" from the doctor in the health department on the third floor, especially if that tall, skinny one with the small, kindly brown eyes were there. But it was too late. She must now tell the truth or lose her job, for the Mammoth had detectives, and took infinite pains to corroborate statements

made on the "third-degree" blanks. So Myrtle took a deep breath, and told the truth.

"Starvation," she said, and tried to look as if her mother went out on the veranda and died of starvation every morning before breakfast.

Irving crumpled up the paper.

"Can't spare you this afternoon," he said brusquely. "We usually discharge our employees for lying——"

"I ain't lying," the girl said sullenly. "My mother is going to be buried today."

"Starvation, eh?" said Irving with fine sarcasm. "What becomes of the seven dollars a week that you earn?"

Myrtle hesitated again; then, with nothing in tone or expression to reveal anything deeper than a ladylike resentment of the inquisitorial proceeding, she explained:

"I didn't know she wasn't eating her meals. She never said nothing to me. I give her two dollars out of my pay every week, and she did sewing besides. She never told me she needed any money. A girl's got to dress, ain't she? She's better off now. She never enjoyed life. I can't help it if she starved. She never told me nothing. Ever since I got a job here three years ago and began making my own money, she's been kicking—about every one I go with and every ribbon I bought—and bawling. She didn't want to enjoy life; she never let no one else enjoy it. She's better off now!"

She had begun in a thin, chill tone, but her utterance rapidly became bitter



"Starvation, eh?" said Irving with fine sarcasm. "What becomes of the seven dollars a week that you earn?"

and broken. She ended with a sob, which she hastily choked down. Tears ruin the complexion and make the eyes swollen.

Cahane looked at her with an intense, luminous curiosity.

"How old was your mother?" he asked.

Myrtle became suddenly furious and reckless.

"Sa-ay," she said dangerously, "don't you believe me?"

Her hand, which had been lightly

touching the edge of his desk, now passionately grabbed a ruler. Irving laid his hand on hers, and his touch was such that the convulsive rigidity of her body slacked. She looked into his eyes, and for some reason thought of the skinny third-floor doctor.

"How much did you pay for that waist?" he asked, indicating her pink, silky, highly ornamental garment.

"It ain't paid for yet," she told him. They then had a long talk together.

After Myrtle left, Irving tore up and

threw away the partly filled out "third-degree" blank. Then he took out a notebook and wrote in it. He took the notebook home that night, the night of his fifth day as office manager, and wrote more in it. His family did not remark on it then, but when he wrote in the same book aloofly every night following, they became mystified. His sister hinted about a diary. His brother accused him of attempting short stories. Even his mother became curious.

Irving C. Cahane was the son of Abraham Cohen, multimillionaire, president of the Mammoth Mail Order House, philanthropist, and so forth. Irving had started life with a very red face and a nose of promise. At twenty-two he was a finished product of Yale University. His nose had cheated fate—it was of a disappointing consistency. His chin and jaw had assumed a clean cut and definite arrangement. He wore clothes—not clothing—and a cane. His present name had developed subtly and suddenly from Isidor Cohen. Blame all of this on civilization, for Irving was not a snob. On the contrary—

Abraham Cohen was alone. It was a miracle. Eleven in the morning was an hour rarely immune from the visitations of directors, orphan-home superintendents, gasoline-engine manufacturers, young men with college aspirations and dirty collars, or large-scale junk dealers.

Irving lounged past the busy blue-eyed stenographer in the outer office and entered the sanctum. The sanctum was furnished with a profusion of rosewood, heavy brass, and rugs. He picked his way across the room to his father's desk and laid a notebook upon it.

"The mysterious notebook, dad," he explained pleasantly. "Not busy, are you? Good! I'd like you to read it now. It's merely a record of figures—

figures of starvation, hope starvation, body starvation, and other varieties. Taken from life in the Mammoth. You'll notice that I've traced the responsibility for each case up to some rule or principle of the house."

Mr. Cohen read. He was a mild-eyed, iron-jawed man of amiable and merciless mien. The notebook was truly filled with instances of human misery. Mr. Cohen read impassively. In half an hour, he looked up. His son was standing by the window, smoking.

"Izz—Irving, I've read part of the way through this," he said, "and it's all very true. You have a heart, my boy, and an observant eye."

Irving lighted another cigarette.

"What," he said, "are you going to do about it?"

"Nothing—absolutely."

"Why?" asked Irving quietly.

"Because our policy and our rules are necessary. You know the reasons. They're in any newspaper interview on the subject. I admit— But why argue on such a question? You understand that these conditions are inevitable. How is the Indiana factory handling the cultivator-repair rush orders?"

"You'll be surprised to hear," said Irving, "that, although I understand the conditions, I do *not* believe them to be inevitable. If you only could see Leo Berghammer, with real literary ability and one lung somewhat to the bad, wasting his best years handling delay-complaint correspondence at twelve a week; if you could only see Margaret Swazey slowly fading under your very eyes—"

Irving stopped, for he was becoming oratorical, and he despised oratory.

Now Abraham Cohen cleared the decks for action. He knew men and situations, and he realized that here was a crisis. He spoke; he combined experience, versatility, inherent impressionistic power, and wrought with rea-

son and compelling tone and expression. Irving's eyes did not once leave his father's face. When he finished talking, Irving held out his hand.

"You should go on the stage, papa," was his comment. "You can give the dyspeptic with the nose glasses back his job as office manager. I resign. Have you a copy of this morning's *Blade*? No? Well, there's a news stand on the corner. Good-by."

Irving stopped in the outer office to bid the blue-eyed stenographer good-by—and committed a crime. For he dragged her from Palm Beach and a moon of Chinese gold and rose-leaf lips and a young man in gray-suede spats whose talk was slangy and rhetorical back to typewriters and gritty erasers and lunch hours. Three minutes ago, the clock had told her that there were five minutes more of noon leisure, and eight pages still remained to the end of the chapter where—a forerunning peek had informed her—"they swayed together—and kissed!"

It was with genuine feeling that Irving said good-by, for blue-eyed, quiet, efficient Rosie was a nice girl, perhaps nicer than he cared to admit. With the neat, clean paper cuffs on her round arms and her well-fitting, crinkly white shirtwaist and pert, close-slung, dark skirt, she was the essence of industry and of charm.

Now, with expectancy and excitement, to the home of Miss Corinne Feldman. Miss Feldman was Irving's fiancée. The announcement of their engagement, to be made next month, was to be a social triumph, for the Feldmans were beyond question in the matter of "class." Money, as money is accumulated in and from the clothing and other businesses, they had not. But—discreetly be it murmured—when Old Man Cohen had been still a *Chasid* in a town not far from Warsaw, and had had nothing but piousness and the pursuit of Talmudical knowledge for

an occupation, and no meals but those graciously bestowed by the kind-hearted wives of *Baal Habatim*, even then Old Man Feldman had spoken unelaborated English and belonged to a country club. *Genug*.

With warmth, Irving related to Miss Corinne his deeds and intentions. He was going to sever both the parental and the mail-order ties. He asserted, with the disdain and positiveness of youth, that he was going out into the world and, unaided by relatives, money, or friends, would make a clean living with his own brain and hands. With her by his side—

The room in which they were was gilded and massive and gloomy. There were paintings, small and obscure in the shadowy depths of their frames, but suggesting opulence by their very vagueness. Irving stood leaning against the black-marble mantle, while from a Louis—Irving knew it was written in Roman and spelled in French, but that was all; Miss Corinne knew, though—well, from the elegance of one of those divans, Miss Corinne pronounced his fate.

With *her* by his side? Was he in earnest? Yes? With the sudden unreality of a nightmare, she deposited a stupendous iceberg upon his warm vaporings. The divan was ten feet away. Somehow it seemed that they had never got any closer. Even when she had acquiesced in his desire for a matrimonial union and he had dutifully embraced her and imprinted lightly the necessary kiss, Irving had felt that his action, while forgivable under the circumstances, was not quite the right thing.

He covered the distance between them now and, sinking down on the divan, took her hand. There was a curious, brave, hurt look in his eyes.

"You can't mean what you say, Corinne," he said, and his voice was soothingly soft. "Why, Corinne, some-



"You're amusing," Miss Corinne interrupted. "You babble as one who knows nothing of the world."

how the thought of you has been behind this whole thing. I measured everything by what I thought you would think of it. You *are* sweet and noble and thoughtful. You are! You must be! I can't—I won't—have you any other way! If I hadn't been confident of your sympathy and en—"

"You're amusing," Miss Corinne interrupted calmly. "You babble as one who knows nothing of the world. You're not old enough to know what

you're doing, and you haven't judgment enough to keep you from throwing everything away on impulse. I said —"

Irving unconsciously crushed her hand in his. She withdrew it gently.

"Listen, dear," he interrupted her in a patient tone. "I don't believe you understand. It isn't an impulse. If you mean what you say, you've turned over my whole world. I can't believe it—I daren't. If you mean—"

"Of course I mean what I say. I said I wouldn't marry you and live in a cheap, smelly flat and wash dishes! Of course I mean it!"

Irving arose, and his eyes widened; he looked like one who is receiving enlightenment faster than his brain can absorb it.

"I don't believe you understand, dear," he began again. "Love should be——"

"I understand perfectly," she returned in a weary tone, "and I had hoped that you wouldn't drag love into the conversation. You think of love as a hot, blind, lifelong impulse, while I quite frankly believe it an arrangement of mutual concessions. I suppose it would shock you if I told you that I considered our pending marriage as a marriage of convenience. You see, you and I don't talk the same language. So why discuss love? It's unnecessary."

"It is," said Irving.

He took his hat from the mahogany table, where he had carelessly tossed it on his entrance, and went to the door. He hesitated a moment, his hand on the knob; then he went back to where Corinne still sat. With a sudden motion, he placed his hand under her chin and lifted her face to the light. It was a cold, beautiful, aristocratic face. The boldness of his action shocked her into temporary submission.

"You're perfect," he said, "absolutely flawless. Like my father. He's a perfect business man, and you're a perfect picture. If you had fuzzy hair or a pug nose"—he spoke more to himself than to her—"or any irregularity in looks or temperament—if I could only feel that you would sometimes be unequal to an occasion, that you might be human once in a while—I'd stick this out and marry you. But—this will be news to you—you've lost out! Not I!" And he strode again to the door, and was gone.

For the first time in his life, he felt untrammelled, free. A sour-faced man was shambling along the sidewalk as he came down the steps of the Feldman home. Irving longed to slap him on the back with loud familiarity. He wanted to sing:

"How are ye, old boy? 'My name is Izzy Cohen. I just gave up several million dollars and one of the most beautiful girls in Chicago. And I have two dollars and ten cents in my pockets. Hooray!'"

He swaggered down the street and shuffled a couple of dance steps when he thought nobody was looking. He whistled a popular song shrilly. He stooped and picked up an empty match box and flung it far out into the street. He pushed his hat far back on his head, and then he pulled it down over his eyebrows. Many, many blocks he traversed thus.

But soon there came a change. His long strides became short ones; his hands ceased swinging and went into his pockets; his feet kicked at cracks in the sidewalk thoughtfully; his mouth became grim and his eyes dreamy. Together with his initial feeling of freedom, he was experiencing the first sensation of utter lonesomeness. Desperately his mind searched the list of the men and women he knew; surely in this large category there was one who had understanding, yet who would not be contemptuous, one who would have sympathy and yet would not offer help.

The office was deserted. The Old Man had gone hours ago, and blue-eyed Rosie had just taken off her paper cuffs and was putting the cover on her typewriter preliminary to leaving when Irving came in.

"Thank God! You're here!" he said. He came directly to her and, with simplicity in his manner, but with sudden confusion in his eyes, said:

"Er—uh—ah——"

Rosie was not a mind reader, but she



"A rule?" Rosie interrupted, amazed. "A rule! And you allow such a rule!"

realized that something big and tremulous and—difficult was happening or about to happen.

"Yes?" she prompted.

If ever eyes showed love and helplessness, if ever a mouth delineated courage and humor, if ever a pose was awkward and intensely expressive of a promise and a question and a prayer, if ever a man said to a woman without words, "I love you *now!* I want you *now!* I will adore you *always!*" then Irving conveyed these things to Rosie.

"My father——" he began stammeringly.

Rosie nodded her head.

"I know," she said gently.

"And my—girl—— Miss Feldman jilted me—a little while ago."

Again Rosie nodded her head, as if to say, "Of course I understand!"

"She—she doesn't want to wash dishes and live in a smelly flat."

Rosie came closer to him, and the growing dusk in the office seemed to abate and become hazily radiant with her smile.

Irving plunged:

"Rosie, will you play second fiddle?"

Despite the disadvantages of a luxurious rearing and the useless kind of a college education, Irving C. Cahane made a success in the business world. It took him fifteen years to do it. He worked up from nothing to the presidency and control of a big corporation. He and Rosie alone knew the self-denial and the hardships of the first few years. But now he had money, and Mrs. Cahane went to *matinées* and settlements and seashores, and had forgotten whether an invoice was a phonograph record or a condition of the throat. And Irving had made himself a reputation. For economical and ingenious system, for sheer originality in business method, for organizing ability, he was without a peer.

For the fifteenth anniversary of their wedding, Irving bought Rosie a season box at the opera. Like a couple of happy children, they made plans for its celebration. The evening would see the glitter and brilliancy of society at a dinner in their home, followed by a box party, but the afternoon was to be their own.

"Let's not make any plans," Rosie had suggested that morning. "Everything we've been doing the last few years has been arranged beforehand. Let's do like we did long, long ago—just after we were married. Do you remember? Oh, don't you remember the silly times we used to have? How we used to wish for things—and how you used to promise me that some day we'd have *everything*? We *have* everything, now, haven't we, dear? Let's play we have *nothing*, just for this afternoon!"

At two in the afternoon, Jean, the chauffeur, delivered Rosie at the main entrance to Irving's plant. Time had wrought no apparent change in her. She was, to all appearances, the same slender, blue-eyed, velvet-cheeked miss who had pinned paper cuffs on the sleeves of her muslin waist fifteen years

before. She even had a book under her arm, the last chapter of which she had finished in the automobile on the way, and it was about Palm Bea—no, Monte Carlo this time; but there were an immaculate young man and a moon of molten gold in it.

A slightly bald person greeted her in the outer office and informed her apologetically that an unexpected, but very important deal had arisen, and that her husband would be occupied for a short time. During which time he—and very puffed up and nervous he was with the honor thus suddenly cast upon him—in accordance with Mr. Cahane's suggestion, would be delighted to show her around the plant.

Exactly five minutes after Irving had cordially shaken the hand of a heavy-jowled, ruddy-cheeked, prosperous-looking man and, with a quiet smile, had given his secretary to file away a contract that meant much in service and money to the house, his wife was ushered in. Her eyes were very blue and very indignant, and she held by the hand a pallid girl of about sixteen with wistful eyes and red hair.

"This is Miss Brent," she introduced. "Miss Brent is a stenographer in the accounting department. I just found her crying in the corridor. They've discharged her! For nothing! She was getting eight dollars a week, and on that supports a mother and two little sisters. Isn't she a darling, Irving? Put her in a nicer department, dear, and raise her salary, and——"

I wish this were a novel instead of a short story. If it were a novel, I should insert right here five big chapters. In chapter one, I should show all of Irving's writhings in order to find his and Rosie's place in the scheme of things during the first two years of their married life—how he got fired from half a dozen jobs; how Rosie proved to be exactly what was needed at exactly the right times, a friend

when Irving needed the comfort of companionship, a tyrant when he needed urge, a wife when he needed love, a slave when he needed service, a melting softness when he needed sympathy, and a goddess when he needed inspiration.

In chapter two, I should tell about his beginning at a real job—how hard he worked and how he and Rosie planned and saved.

In chapter three, I should introduce Irving as a capitalist—a small, exceedingly modest capitalist, to be sure, but one with real money, nevertheless. I should show Rosie as an unusual woman here, because, instead of following the rut of habit and still worrying about the little things, including Irving's business, she suddenly became a woman interested in expensive rugs and "light sixes."

In chapter four, I should bring out Irving's remarkable grasp of big-business values and the workmanlike way in which he applied his theories and judgments. I should give a convincing portrayal of his genius for organization and management, a genius that came even to Irving as a great surprise and that proved so absorbing a thing that for a long time he lived in nothing but the atmosphere of his plans and their carrying out.

Then I should make chapter five psychological. I should trace Irving's attitude toward life from the days of his marriage to the present time. I should show how he was a volatile young man with a wide range of powers and faculties. Then I should point out how, in his utter engrossment in the fascinating intricacies of the creation and the manipulation of a big business, he lost sight of the human element, except as one of many factors. I should show that his home life was something beautiful and warm, but that his business existence was separated from this atmosphere as if by a wall—that it was,

after fifteen years, almost impossible for him to feel businessy at home or homy at business. Then I should go on with the story.

"Why were you discharged?" Irving asked the girl. His expression and manner were a cold, judicial mask. Rosie had never seen him that way before.

The girl said something about a typewriter ribbon and a letterhead and some other technical things.

Irving turned toward his wife.

"I can't do anything for this girl. I'd like to, but there's a rule——"

"A rule?" Rosie interrupted, amazed. "A rule! And you allow such a rule?"

Irving's lips compressed tightly; his eyes turned with an impersonal politeness to the girl.

"Miss—ah—Brent, you'd better report to the employment department if you have any complaint to make. The executive department can do nothing for you."

After the girl had gone, he turned to his wife, who was staring at him incredulously.

"I'm sorry, dear," he said in a bored tone, "but we can't juggle these rules about at whim. It makes for bad discipline. I conceived this particular rule myself. It saves us more than two thousand dollars a year in typewriter ribbons and ink. Have you asked Doctor Rosenzweig to the week-end party for the twentieth?"

He glanced at Rosie calmly, but a look of concern came over his face at what he saw. She had shrunk against the wall, like a hurt child, her hands held tightly to her breast, looking at him with a touch of fear and of tragedy in her expression. Suddenly she rushed out of the office. Irving remained at his desk, waiting for her return somewhat nervously.

"The obstinate, cute little cuss!" he

said to himself. "Bet she's going to give that girl money! *Women!*"

But if Rosie had left heated, she came back aflame. Irving arose as she entered, feeling less poised than he had felt for many years. He went to her, intending to place his arm about her shoulders and to say something like: "It was disagreeable, dear, but let's forget about it. Business is business. And now let's just you and I go off on our 'bat,'" but Rosie evaded his caress.

"What," she said, breathing unevenly, "is the number of that—type-writer rule?"

"Seventy-something—I forget. Dear, let's not talk about this to-day. Tomorrow—or next week—— There's no hurry——"

He tried to put his arm around her

again, but she held him off with clenched fists and rigid arms. Her eyes were burning. There was no blue in them; they were coal black.

"Rosie, Rosie!" he said. "It's our wedding anniversary, Rosie!"

"Our wedding anniversary!" Rosie sobbed.

She ran to the window and stood with her back to him. He stood motionless where she had left him, dazed, miserable. Rosie was Rosie, and the office was the office. Each had been a big and a beautiful thing to him; each had been part of his life and had grown as he had grown; each he could understand in itself. But now, when in a flash they had fused, he floundered. Illumination was there, surely, but for the moment he was nearly blinded. He went to her, saying:

"Please, dearest, please——"

She turned around abruptly and faced him. Her eyes were dry. Her face was composed. It relieved the tension of his emotion.

"How many more—economical—rules have you got?" she asked in quite an ordinary tone.

The sound of her voice came gratefully to him; the pending storm was averted, he felt. He replied to the context of her question; its significance he did not see then.

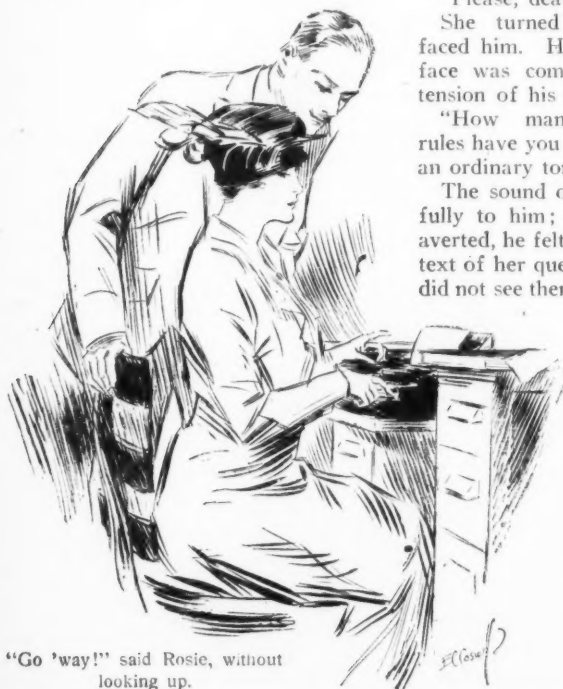
"Stacks and stacks of them."

"And you're going to let them all stand?" she asked unsteadily.

"Why—why—I have to."

Rosie's eyes became black again, and he felt a sway of her body toward him and away from him, toward him and away from him.

"Do you know what I feel like doing?" she said. "I feel like tear-



"Go 'way!" said Rosie, without looking up.

ing down your whole business—like taking your inkwell and papers and throwing them at you and stamping, stamping, stamping on you! Oh, I feel like tearing my two-hundred-dollar suit and my thirty-dollar waist and my fifty-dollar hat into shreds! I feel like crying and fighting and hating—hating! But do you know what I'm going to do?" There was a fierce little smile on her lips.

Irving shook his head numbly.

"I'll show you!" she said.

She tore off her frilly coat. Then she rolled up the sleeves of her filmy waist and went to the stenographer's desk in the corner of the room. From the big drawer in the lower right-hand side she drew out two sheets of curly brown cardboard.

"They still keep them in the same place," she remarked, putting on the paper cuffs with the rapidity that comes only from habit. She inserted a sheet of stationery in the typewriter, with some awkwardness, for they had used different typewriters fifteen years ago, and began to click away, at first slowly, but with increasing speed.

Irving stood by the window for a while, watching her. He walked over and began to read over her shoulder.

"Go 'way!" said Rosie, without looking up.

So he went back to the window and stared down into the street. Several times he passed his hand over his brow; his whole body was shaking and he was frowning intensely. It was painful, this readjustment to the sudden new glare of light.

He heard Rosie coming to him.

"You're a very, very blind man," she said at his shoulder, "even if you were smart enough to clear a million dollars last year. I have here two letters, Irving, and they're more important than our wedding license was. Do you remember when you married me—how it happened? Do you remember when

you told me that all of a sudden you saw that this world is a world of human beings and not of money or of business or of—'good' marriages? And when you said that, as soon as you saw that, the first person you thought of was me? You called me your symbol—do you remember? You said that I represented warmth and—kindness—and—love.

"You'll sign both these letters, Irving—both. If you don't, then this isn't our wedding anniversary, for we've never been really married—married in the bigger, finer sense. If you don't, you've spent fifteen years committing a crime! One is a letter to Miss Brent—I got her address—asking her to report for work in the executive offices to-morrow at eighteen a week. She *may* be an awfully poor stenographer. Won't that be gloriously uneconomical?"

Irving put his hands on the shoulders of this half-laughing, half-crying, all-glowing being. His face was the face of a boy who is going to cry in a minute if you don't turn away quick.

"And—and—the other letter?" he said.

"The other letter is addressed to me. Sign here!" she ordered, placing the sheet on the window sill and covering the typewriting with both hands.

"Let me read it," said Irving, trying gently to lift her hands off.

"No. Sign it first. It's my anniversary present."

Irving lifted both her hands in his and kissed them. Then he carefully laid her hands back so that they again covered the letter and wrote his name in his boyish, heavy scrawl. He kissed her lips and patted her cheek and mussed her hair.

"Now," he said, taking the sheet, "I'll read you your present."

But Rosie took the paper from him and held it behind her back.

"No!" she said. "I'm going to read it! It says:

"DEAREST ROSIE: I've been an awful dub. I've been going around in circles without knowing it. I've built up such a big business that it was bigger than me. But it isn't going to be any more. I'm going to dedicate our fifteenth wedding anniversary to Miss Brent, Incorporated. I'm going to lose at least two thousand dollars a year on typewriters and ribbons and erasers. I don't know what to do with the millions a year that are coming in to me, anyway. I'm going to use my wonderful brain and many abilities to sail through those stacks and stacks of rules and just bust them all up. I'm going to—"

But Irving interrupted her. The transition was now thorough; he was in his office, but he found it easy at last to be a lover.

"Do you know what I'm going to do?" he said. "I'm going to spoon with you."

About four-thirty, as Irving was helping her on with her coat, Rosie said:

"It wasn't planned at all, was it? But, oh, wasn't it an expensive 'bat'?"

When they had reached the door, Rosie uttered a little cry.

"Oh! I've forgotten something!"

"I know what it is," said Irving promptly.

"Bet you don't!"

"Bet I do!"

"Well, then, what is it?"

"It's your——"

But Rosie had become a kitten; her finger on his lips stopped him.

"I'll tell you what!" she sang. "Let's play a game. You don't say what you think it is, outright, but just hint around, and I'll tell you if you're 'warm' or 'medium' or 'cold.'"

"Inexpensive," said he.

"Warm!"

"They're made by hand."

"They! Co-o-old!"

"I give up!"

"Maybe I can help you," said Rosie thoughtfully. "Is—is it printed?"

"Printed! No!"

"I wonder what you can be thinking of," she mused. "I'll tell you what!" brightly. "First you shut your eyes and I'll get it, and then I'll shut my eyes and you'll get what you think it is. And then we'll give them to each other as anniversary presents extraordinary to-night!"

So, while Irving tightly shut his eyes, Rosie tiptoed across the room and grabbed her Monte Carlo book from a chair and hid it under her coat. Then she said, "Ready!" and turned her face to the wall, while Irving sneaked over to the stenographer's desk, took the paper cuffs from the drawer where Rosie had been careful to replace them, and tenderly crushed them into his overcoat pocket.



A Taste for Self Improvement

By
Anne O'Hagan



ILLUSTRATED BY VICTOR PERARD

GARRY McDERMOTT, although his mother had bidden him make haste home with the pail of beer from Schemmel's, which was to give flavor to her evening meal and to induce a soporific tranquillity after it, loitered in front of the swinging doors. His homeward path lay around the corner, but he stared up the avenue toward the L station with all the intentness of a lover whose lady is late to an appointment; and he bore, with only absent-minded, perfunctorily profane retort, the maledictions of hasty gentlemen who collided with his small, unobtrusive figure as they essayed a swift entrance into Schemmel's. Garry was waiting, while the foam in his mother's pail declined toward the bitter brown of the liquor, for a glimpse of Mr. Detwyler, bound for his dwelling in Farleigh Court.

His patience was finally rewarded. Down the elevated stairs at the corner came the slightly stooped figure, limping homeward. Garry's heart leaped up, and the imps of mischief which the concentration of his watchfulness had briefly banished from his eyes reappeared. He moved out into the middle of the sidewalk in front of the saloon; and as the object of his vigil approached, he lifted the bucket to his youthful face, went through the pantomime of deep drinking, and was engaged in wiping an imaginary foam from his lips when Mr. Detwyler came up with him.

"Garry, Garry!" cried that worthy man. "Has your mother actually sent you here again? And you—you young scallawag, you! Drinking yourself! I tell you what it is, Garry, my boy—if your mother isn't going to stop this, I'll

see to it that Schemmel does. I'll report him for letting minors into his place."

"Aw, me aunt's brudder-in-law's de cop," exulted Garry, secure, defiant.

"It'll be some one higher up than your aunt's brother-in-law," declared Mr. Detwyler.

He was a man of about fifty, neatly dressed in the clothes of a self-respecting artisan. His brown eyes were very bright, and his face was round, kind, and unwrinkled. He spoke in the somewhat inflectionless voice of one hard of hearing.

"Aw, Buttinsky!" shouted Garry, who was, by this time, attended by a little gallery of admirers.

"Did you tell your mother what I told you about the effect of alcohol upon the lining of the human stomach?" demanded Mr. Detwyler, earnestly, urgently.

"Sure I did."

"And what did she say?"

"She said for youse to go to hell," reported Garry briskly. And he amplified the theme as, apparently, his mother had done.

"But did the woman say nothing about the facts I bade you tell her?" Mr. Detwyler interrupted, unmoved by maledictions. "Did she say nothing at all about the lining of her stomach, about the effects of drink upon the heart, kidneys, and——"

"She said youse was de worst busy-face in de neighborhood," caroled Garry gleefully.

The man sighed and reached his hand into his pocket. He produced a penny. Garry, whose hawklike eyes had followed each movement with the prescience born of former experiences, immediately extended a dirty claw and received the penny into it.

"Come around to my place before eight to-night, and I'll give you some more pamphlets to take home to her.

Maybe you could get her to read them——"

"I could for a nickel," interrupted Mr. Detwyler's agent of enlightenment.

But that gentleman shook his head with unexpected firmness.

"You'll come for the penny or you'll stay at home." He issued his ultimatum in his mild, monotonous voice. "And now I'm going in to speak to Schemmel about selling to a minor."

He stepped up to the swinging door, and Garry's little litany of vituperation—"buttinsky, tightwad, busy-face"—pursued him without effect. At times he found his slight deafness a happy asset.

His conversation in the saloon with the wasted diplomat who genially represented Schemmel behind the bar was brief and entirely amiable. The diplomat averred that of course he knew he oughtn't to be lettin' a small shaver like that Garry McDermott come inside at all, but what was he to do? Was Mrs. McDermott to be deprived of a drink which, for refreshment, nourishment, and surcease from pain, had all the waters of mythology looking like a germ-infested puddle simply because a skunk of a husband had deserted her five years ago and there was no longer a full-grown male in her establishment to rush the growler in a seemly manner? Would that seem right or fair to Mr. Detwyler, who—the diplomat declared that he knew the fact well—would not hurt a fly, much less a woman?

Mr. Detwyler interrupted him with the assurance that he had quite misinterpreted his—Mr. Detwyler's—attitude toward the fly. Harm the fly? Most assuredly he would harm the fly! He would exterminate the fly! Was the diplomat by any chance aware that the fly was the cause of more disease, more death, than any other single agency? The diplomat professed himself aroused by the infor-

mation. Mr. Detwyler promised him some pamphlets on the subject and seemed about to leave the saloon without further reference to the errand upon which he had entered it, but turned at the door to say, in his blank, yet curiously kind, voice: "And about the McDermott boy, then—" And the diplomat, cornered, made vague promises.

Arrived at the model-tenement building in Farleigh Court—which, in the days before noisy agitators had made the Farleighs ashamed of deriving too large a share of their income from sunless dwellings in rear alleys and from firetrap rookeries, had been Cranberry Creek Lane, and the most actively worked "terrible example" of congestion the city afforded—arrived at his home, Mr. Detwyler let himself in and looked about him with radiant approval. The walls and stairs were of gray concrete, forbidding to the eye, but splendidly reassuring to the less sensuous powers of apprehension; one perceived at once that a stream of clear water directed by a hose attached to the faucet in the sink behind the stairs could clean them thoroughly in five minutes. The rounded junctures with floor and ceilings and the rounded corners gave further hygienic reassurances.

Two telephone booths, equipped with automatic slot attachments, stood opposite the stairs, affording the dwellers in the house, as Mr. Detwyler often said, the greatest advantage of a first-class hotel. Beside the booths, the letter boxes for the apartments were ranged—thirty-six of them, capacious affairs that would hold, without unsightly bulging, a good many pamphlets. Until he had found the Farleigh Court Dwellings, Mr. Detwyler had suffered much from the inadequacy of letter boxes.

As, with beaming, satisfied eyes, he drew out the day's offerings of literature and correspondence, the door of

the booth beside him opened, and a woman, a stranger to him, trotted through the hall to the door. He had a swift, vague impression of neatness and brownness and briskness. It was a pleasanter impression than his feminine neighbors usually imprinted upon his consciousness.

In his own tenement, on the fourth floor, he set to work to prepare his supper. It was a simple matter. There was rice in a covered dish of white enamel ware, and milk, its bottle still sealed, stood outside on the window ledge. The window gave upon the gray-walled, gray-floored courtyard about which the tenement was built on three sides, but, being only one story below the roof, Mr. Detwyler was happily convinced that when the sun was at the meridian, it must illumine his glass panes and shine into his tiny box of a kitchen. On many of the window sills which his view commanded stood bottles of milk similar to his own; and on some, whose inhabitants had not yet, apparently, advanced as far as Mr. Detwyler in the simplification of the bodily needs, more elaborate menus were inexpensively refrigerating. At one window, diagonally across the court from his, he observed two bright red geraniums. They illuminated the stony grayness like two little darts of flame. They captured his eye. They had not been there in the morning. He looked at the other windows and marveled that no one else had ever foreseen what a heart-warming effect might be achieved by red flowers in a gray court.

"To-morrow," said Mr. Detwyler to himself, "I'll get some, too. It's a community duty."

Then he sat down in a rocker beside the oilcloth-covered table and ate his rice and milk, keeping an eye upon the geraniums until the October twilight closed in upon the court and the spots of brightness were absorbed in the gloom. Then he snapped on his light

and read, with kindling interest, a government report upon the liming of sour soils. He did not own a square foot of the earth's surface—he believed in cremation and hence had not purchased even the small share of cemetery holding necessary to less progressive persons—but all compilations of facts were absorbing to him. No young girl in the subway ever bestowed a more breathless attention upon an Elinor Glyn heroine than he upon his reports.

But an hour finished it. That, he had discovered, was the trouble with a great deal of instructive literature—an hour finished it, and then what was a man to do? He did not have to debate the question. Since coming to Farleigh Court, he had always known. He would wash his white enamel bowl, wash his hands, put on his coat again, take up his hat, and limp over to Farleigh Forum on the corner.

When the Farleigh heirs had set about the conversion of the ancient crime of their race, the Cranberry Creek Lane property, into a moral asset, they had made a thorough job of it. Farleigh Forum, the great, five-story building, with the neighborhood laundry tubs and cooking-class kitchens in the basement, with the neighborhood clubrooms and sewing-class rooms, with the neighborhood dance hall and the neighborhood assembly room—Farleigh Forum was a perfectly respectable, orthodox, Puritan family's bribe to the Higher Powers to forget what once had been. And thither each evening Mr. Detwyler wended his grateful way, and paid the diversified speakers on many topics the compliment of a close attention. Not all the denizens of the neighborhood, it may be mentioned in passing, were as faithful in helping the Farleigh family win salvation as was Mr. Detwyler.

On this autumn evening, the attraction advertised upon the large bulletin board in front of the forum was "A

Trip through Anladusia," with stereopticon views. It was not, so the size of the audience proclaimed, a magnetic topic. There were sad empty rows of chairs, with only here and there an auditor. Mr. Detwyler's eyes traveled, in melancholy calculation, over the hall. Scarce a score! It was too bad! It was too bad! Then he saw a female figure in brown. It was that of the brisk little woman whom he had marked in the hall of his dwelling that evening. A glow of satisfaction pervaded his being. There was a woman who did not shy from information like an unruly horse from a steam roller. There was a woman who actually courted knowledge! To be sure, Anladusia was a light topic, especially as presented by this frivolous, merely picturesque speaker. But then she could not have foreseen that!

When he came home the next evening, he carried awkwardly beneath his arm two potted geraniums purchased in the dingy florist's under the elevated station. Carefully he set them upon his window sill, only to observe with a startled pang of desolation that the other two had disappeared from across the courtyard. But while he debated the meaning of this, the superintendent of the building emerged from his subterranean fastnesses and stood in the middle of the yard, belligerently scanning all the windows. Immediately he reentered his cave and shortly thereafter he rapped on Mr. Detwyler's door. There was, he explained in hostile tones, a city ordinance forbidding the cumbering of window sills with unguarded flower pots; the rights of pedestrians below—even in courtyards where pedestrianism was infrequent—must be maintained! A box, securely adjusted to the window frame, must be used. He had already so informed that newcomer into his sovereignty, Miss Jubb; and he would now be obliged if Mr. Detwyler took instant note of it.

What, Mr. Detwyler inquired, was the newcomer going to do?

The superintendent growled that, being a fool, like all women, she talked of having a window box made, if it wasn't too expensive. Whereupon, Mr. Detwyler, who was employed by a firm of fine cabinet makers, said with eager generosity that she mustn't do that; he himself could fix her up one out of some old wooden boxes. He'd knock it up to-night and paint it to-morrow—

"An' the next night'll come a frost," snarled the superintendent, little recking that he almost quoted Shakespeare.

"Never mind!" cried Mr. Detwyler, beaming. "Maybe we could grow ivy or some of those glossy little evergreens in them, like the houses on Ninth Street."

Grunting disgust, the ruler of the model tenement withdrew, and Mr. Detwyler, after canvassing the empty box possibilities of his minute establishment, looked from his window, counted, calculated, and generally took his bearings. Having thus located Miss Jubb's abode, he slipped a note beneath her door as he went to work the next morning, it read:

DEAR MISS: I am making a box for your geraniums if you can wait two or three days



He set to work to prepare his supper.

for the paint to dry. I suppose you are aware that growing plants are healthful in living rooms, as they absorb the carbonic-acid gas given out by the human lungs in respiration? Yours respectfully,

L. M. DETWYLER.

Miss Jubb replied in due time with gratitude and discretion, though avoiding the carbonic-acid-gas test; and after three or four days the two court windows sent sparkling little messages of good cheer to each other across the well of gray concrete. Some of the neighbors, inspired by them, made horticultural efforts of their own, calling upon Mr. Detwyler for aid with the

boxes and, presumably, upon Miss Jubb for floral suggestions. By the time the first frost, prophesied by the superintendent, came in late October, something of the curse had been lifted from the inner walls of Farleigh Court, and milk bottles had learned to hide decorously behind vegetation. Even when frost came to put an end to scarlet and pink and white, there remained, as the aspiring mind of Mr. Detwyler had foreseen, evergreen possibilities whose somewhat prohibitive expense was shared by an enthusiastic sentimentalist of the Farleigh family—feminine and unscientific.

But though Mr. Detwyler, having the trained taste of a man whose civic conscience has been educated by countless lectures and innumerable pamphlets, found life more attractive because of the window activities of the building and his share in promoting them; although he was amazed, by his evening survey of Miss Jubb's window diagonally across the yard from his own, to learn what possibilities of good cheer a model tenement possessed; although he immediately imitated her improvements in the line of thin white curtains and a droplight with a workmanlike green shade, and even contemplated the possibility of a canary in a gilt cage; although he thus admitted her influence and was grateful to her for her voiceless hints, it was not she who chiefly intrigued his imagination as the autumn days wore on.

He had never met Miss Jubb in person; the etiquette of the tenement and the hard-of-hearing habits of his life were both against it. But there was a still more potent reason why he never sought to make her acquaintance. In the little brown woman of the lecture hall he had discovered an affinity. He knew it, although they had never spoken to each other, she always making her escape immediately after the address, and he always remaining to

induce the speaker to clear up this obscurity or that. But intercourse with her was as unnecessary as it was with Miss Jubb. The brown woman was a kindred spirit. Each night when Mr. Detwyler limped into Farleigh Forum, prepared to give his earnest, slightly deaf attention to the discourse, there sat the little, elderly brown thrush, alert, eager.

No matter what the subject, hers was evidently a mind to grapple with it. The cost of the Panama Canal was an open ledger to her as to him; fire prevention, the pasteurization of milk, the duties of the department of weights and measures to the citizenry and of the citizenry to the department, reforesting for posterity, the extirpation of the brown-tail moth, municipal ownership of public utilities, home rule for cities—what subject was there that failed to appeal to that catholic mind? Mr. Detwyler used to muse over it in a pleasant trance.

Other women might come to one lecture or to two, or to lectures on certain sorts of topics. Only the little brown woman came to all. It was wonderful! Except that nothing would induce him to be guilty of such a social false step as trying to thrust himself upon a lady's notice, Mr. Detwyler would have liked to introduce himself, to exchange views, information, pamphlets. He would have liked her advice upon the increasingly outrageous Mrs. McDermott, whose exploit in thoroughly soaking in beer all the pamphlets with which he had supplied her, and sending them back to him, was a cause of anxious preoccupation to him. Or, at any rate, Garry was. For though Garry, when he had acted as the bearer of the malodorous, pulpy mass, tied securely in brown wrapping paper, had been, of course, impish, there had been apparent in him of late a loss of spirit. Even Mr. Detwyler's mild, unacute regard had perceived it. The boy was bare-

footed, too, though November counseled shoes, and his sharp little gamin's face was pinched and bluish.

On the occasion of the return of the pamphlets, he had waited with a ghost of his old sparkle in his eyes while Mr. Detwyler had untied the knotted cords, sniffing a little distrustfully the while. But when the good man had discerned what the package contained and had lifted his face, flushed with something like anger for the first time in Garry's experience of it, the boy's expression had changed. He had placed his arm in a defensive attitude before his face and had stood between Mr. Detwyler and the door. Something in his position had changed the direction of the man's indignation.

"So she cuffs you on the head, does she?" he had said. "A woman like that doesn't deserve to have a child." Then he had remembered that a child must honor its parents, however dishonorable, and he had gone on. "Of course, Garry, it isn't really your mother who hits you. It's the drink."

"Aw, she boozes all de time," Garry had said surlily, yet with quivering lips. "We got ter git. We'll be set on de street nex' Wednesday if we don't have de coin for de agent, an' we ain't goin' to have it. She ain't woiked fer a mont'. Say, how old does a feller have to be to enlist?"

"Enlist? Oh, you're too young for that, my boy." Mr. Detwyler had jammed the cover down upon his garbage pail, into which he had crowded the beer-soaked literature. "By the time you're old enough to fight, maybe there won't be any more wars. The cost of war is too great. The working people will not—" He had looked among the pamphlets stacked on the double shelf that ran along one side of his room. "Here is an article proving— But I suppose you're too young to read it."

He had paused and looked at Garry

wistfully, the leaflet between his fingers. Obviously he had hoped that the boy would deny the imputation of youth and would demand the literature on the cost of wars. But Garry had been deaf to the insult to his years.

"Schemmel's stopped sellin' to her," he had volunteered, his mind upon his own problems. "She goes herself to Harrity's now. Say, do youse t'ink de Gerrys'll get me? De lady dat keeps our house says so." There had been naked terror in his eyes.

"Institutionalism in the care of dependent children," Mr. Detwyler had answered, "has proved the most expensive and least effective way of dealing with one of the gravest problems that confront society." But he had looked with great kindness and not a little perplexity upon the small boy as he spoke. And he had ended upon an inspiration of the heart instead of a recollection from his reading. "Would you like a little supper, Garry? I'm through with mine, but there's something left, I think."

Garry's eyes had brightened and he had admitted that he could eat if it were made obligatory. His host had brought in the remains of the milk and had found, in his cupboard, baker's rolls and a large hunk of baker's gingerbread.

"I eat my hearty meal at noon," he had explained, as he had set forth the viands. "I believe the authorities differ as to whether the hearty meal should be eaten then or when the day's tasks have been completed. I should prefer mine in the evening, I admit. I incline to the view that relaxation promotes the digestive processes. But there is a good eating house near my place of business, and so— You like the gingerbread, Garry?"

Garry uncouthly, but unmistakably had intimated that he did, indeed, like it. Mr. Detwyler had sighed.

"Youthful appetite gives it a flavor,



A glow of satisfaction pervaded his being. There was a woman who did not shy at information like an unruly horse from a steam roller.

I suppose. I bought it because of its outward resemblance to that which my mother used to make in my boyhood days. I lived, Garry, in a village, and all the housewives did their own baking. The spirit of coöperation was unknown, which is industrially wasteful. But—he had sighed—"I am constrained to admit that the gingerbread was better."

"I knew a feller lived in one of dem villages. He's a mutt. His parents died an' he's come to live wit' his aunt in our house. If my old woman croaks, d'youse t'ink my aunt what married de cop's brudder'll take me?"

"I don't know, Garry. But let us

hope that your mother will not cro—die. If she would only regard her own best interests and give up——"

"Aw, she'll never cut out de booze," Garry had prophesied nonchalantly. Thanks to the restoratives administered by his host, he was able to resume his man-of-the-world swagger. "It's got her, all right, all right. Well, so long—unless youse'd like to send her some more litrachoor."

"No. But you can come in any evening, Garry. There's always enough for two here."

"Maybe I will sometimes," Garry had said condescendingly. "De gingerbread ain't so woise as youse t'ink."

With which grateful observation, he had passed out into the clean gray-cement hall and down the clean gray-cement stairs.

That evening Mr. Detwyler was one of an audience of five in the Farleigh Forum who listened to a young man from the comptroller's office on the cost of running the city. Three others of the audience were boys coerced into the meeting by the energetic manager of the forum, and the fifth was the little brown woman. Mr. Detwyler's thoughts, which had been turned out of their usual channel toward Garry and Garry's mother, were strangely inattentive to the lecturer.

There she sat, his ideal woman, name known. For the first time in thirty years he had a moment's active disloyalty toward the memory of a girl who had lived in a house with lilacs in the village where the housewives baked their own bread; the passive disloyalty of forgetfulness had long been his. He did not say that he had transferred to the lecture attendant the vague, sweet feelings which had troubled his boyhood, but he did ask himself:

"I wonder, if Susie had lived, whether she would have developed so congenial a mind as this woman? It's doubtful, doubtful."

Then, dismissing sentiment, he limped forward to verify his impression concerning the amount paid to the commissioner of street cleaning, and the little woman went home. Ah, well, had Susie lived, perhaps he himself would have had other interests than these impersonal ones. Perhaps there would have been something to make a common ground upon which he and Susie could comfortably have stood, no matter how she had failed to develop civically! And the vision of Garry, prepared to ward off a blow, obtruded between him and the platform.

Garry obsessed him so greatly that evening that he had forgotten the cor-

rected figures before he reached home, and as he looked out across the court to the light shining pleasantly in the green-drop lamp behind the net curtain and the little box of evergreen and ivy in Miss Jubb's window, he found himself wishing that that lady, who seemed to him to have a genius for homemaking, would take an interest in the lad.

He was awakened from a troubled dream of selling gingerbread to a long line of street cleaners by the shrill, siren shrieks of fire engines. There was one respect in which Mr. Detwyler had remained incorrigibly young—he could never resist the call of fire engines. He could not longer run to conflagrations, but he could and did limp with remarkable velocity to every one that obligingly occurred in his neighborhood during his unoccupied hours. He had even been known to leave a lecture at the forum at the lure of an alarm.

He was out of bed in an instant. His windows, giving only upon the courtyard, afforded him no indication of the direction in which the engines were rushing, but the sounds seemed near at hand. When, within five minutes, he was dressed and in the street, he learned that the fire was, indeed, close by. In the tenement around the corner from Farleigh Court, the flames were issuing from all the windows, and great, acrid swirls of smoke were black in the red glare. On the roof, still intact, the figures of the firemen and of the frightened families moved wildly, like performers in some weird and terrifying exhibition of acrobats.

The tenement on the farther side had a lower roof than the blazing one, and there were constant flights up and down short ladders, constant dropping of small, inert bundles from the arms of the firemen on the upper level to the arms of those on the lower, outstretched to receive them. And always, through the trapdoor of the burning

building, were appearing grotesque, half-clad figures, clutching to their bosoms hastily snatched treasures—odd boots, parrots, cats, what not. But soon the red roar of flames sounded through that door also; and the crash of falling timbers was added to the roar of flames. The tenement was lost, and if any yet remained within its furnace—

"God have mercy on their souls!" said an old Irish woman as the fire burst through the roof.

And truly all that remained to do was to pray and to play countless streams of water upon the adjoining houses, lest they, too, should catch fire.

Mr. Detwyler, even in the days when he had run to fires, had never before been so close to one. He was excited, carried out of himself. He tried to steady his mind by recalling something the lecturer on fire prevention had said, but he could remember nothing. He found himself, quite without deliberation, helping women and children, sending them to Schemmel's at the corner, invading that resort himself and bidding the diplomat, who slept in a room off the bar, to make quarts of coffee and pounds of sandwiches. Schemmel's noonday free lunch was reputed to be quite edible, and the barkeeper flung himself valiantly and generously into the task of using up all the loaves and the cold meat designed for it. He started coffee in a tank and administered doses of brandy so judiciously that Mr. Detwyler would not have quoted alcohol statistics to him even if he could have remembered them.

He had just convoyed to Schemmel's life-saving station an old woman bitterly bewailing a treasured pink conch shell, her household pride for twenty years, and a young mother with a baby who sobbed: "But suppose—but suppose—" and shuddered herself almost into convulsions at the supposition that she was unable to name. As he went out again, he collided at the

door with the brown woman. Her arms were full of what looked like pink flannel.

"Oh!" cried Mr. Detwyler.

"Oh, I'm so glad to find you, Mr. Detwyler!" she chirped. "I've got a pile of flannelette wrappers here, and I'll bring some more. I was making them for St. Ann's Hospital—I sew for the Sisters—for the free-ward patients, you know. But I knew that the Sisters would want— And so I telephoned, and they said of course—"

In spite of her incoherence, the brown woman was perfectly intelligible to Mr. Detwyler, and he led her back into Schemmel's, where a crowd of half-clad women shivered, despite thimblefuls of brandy and beakers of steaming coffee. Somehow he felt it incumbent upon him to wait until she had apportioned the wrappers and to lead her forth again.

"That was a very intelligent thing to do, Miss—Miss—" he began.

"Miss Jubb," she supplied. "It wasn't very intelligent— Anybody would have thought—" and he noticed, with delight, that he could hear her distinctly, even in the uproar of the street.

And so the lady of the geraniums and the lady of the forum were one and the same, and—

"Why, Garry! Why, Garry!"

For a small figure had catapulted itself against his legs. A child was choking with awful sobs. They paused and bent to him. By and by they made out the strangled cry:

"Is she in there? Is she in there?"

"He means his mother," explained Mr. Detwyler, his kind eyes frightened.

"She knocked over the gas heater. She wouldn't get up! She wouldn't get up!" Garry continued to wail.

Mr. Detwyler could not think of any words suitable to the occasion. But Miss Jubb stooped down and held the half-clad, skinny little figure close and

murmured something that gradually soothed the gasps of fright and of awful premonition. Mr. Detwyler thought she was even more remarkable at that moment than when she sat, an active civic intelligence, in the forum, and took mental notes on the care of dependent children.

The conclusion, of course, is obvious in essentials. Only the incidentals remain to be told. For instance, that Mr. and Mrs. Detwyler—née Jubb—did not remain in Farleigh Court, despite its manifold advantages, because they agreed perfectly that the associations of the congested districts were not good for boys, and that a little, semidetached cottage out near High Bridge would not really be much farther from Mr. Detwyler's work, thanks to the subway. And that Garry learned to differentiate between homemade and baker's gingerbread in a short time, and scorned the latter with all the arrogance of the

nouveau riche. And that both his adoptive parents often assured themselves that there was nothing sentimental in their course toward the boy. It was, they said seriously, a clear case of civic duty to do what they could toward improving the method of dealing with the dependent-child problem. It would have been a sad commentary, would it not, upon their ability to profit by remarkable advantages if they had not taken Garry themselves and tried upon him those theories with which they had become so intelligently familiar?

And it did not occur to them that Garry, day by day, was making greater changes in them than they in him; any more than it occurred to Mr. Detwyler that his back yard, where he conscientiously and rewardingly practiced liming, fertilizing, and dry-irrigating according to instructions in the agricultural pamphlets issued by a benevolent government, was having results upon him as marked as his upon it.



ACROSS THE BLUE

JUST at sunset the salt sea wind, drifting in from off the blue,
Breathes a song that no one else could ever know;
And across the waste a whisper comes, a whisper just for you,
And it makes you want to leave the town and go.

Across the blue, the glamour of the bay,
There is some one waiting for you, far and far,
Just a little west of sunset, just a little past the day,
Keeping tryst, in the shadow of a star.

Just at sunset something beckons; there's a whisper, and you know
That the world you're in was never made for you.
And you cannot tell the reason, but you leave it all and go
Where the whisper calls you, deep across the blue.

Across the blue, the magic of the bay,
There is some one waiting for you, far and far,
Just a little west of heaven, just a little past to-day,
Keeping tryst, in the shadow of a star.

MARY CAROLYN DAVIES.

How to Treat *the* Complexion

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes, even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS,

IT is the common wonder of all men," says Sir Thomas Browne, "how among so many millions of faces there should be none alike." Yet, with this endless diversity, we possess one feature in common which at birth is beautiful in all—the outer covering of the body, the skin, or, as we are more apt to refer to it, the complexion.

It is safe to say that in all nature there is nothing sweeter or more fragrant than the velvety skin of early childhood, unless it be that of young maidenhood—

Flushing white and mellow'd red;
Gradual tints, as when there glows
In snowy milk the bashful rose.

Only a poet, perhaps only an Irish poet, could so describe the exquisite beauty of a lovely complexion. Did his fancy create the picture, or do such skins really exist?

The women of the British Isles have always been noted for their fresh color. Yet, in spite of a fair skin being the rule and not the exception among them, now and then one woman stands out beyond all others and for all time by the dazzling quality of her complexion. Thus, among the "Windsor Beauties," the celebrated Frances Jennings is described in the memoirs of the Count de Grammont as follows: "Adorned with all the blooming treasures of youth, she had the fairest and brightest com-

plexion that ever was seen. The turn of her face was exquisitely fine, and her swelling neck was as fair and as fine as her face. In a word, her person gave the idea of Aurora or the Goddess of the Spring."

Allowing for the extravagant language of the period, the fair Jennings was in very truth so conspicuous in this respect that she turned a merry frolic, in which she attempted to disguise herself as an "orange girl" and mingle with the country folk, into a penance. So a peerless complexion may have its drawbacks, too!

The innate quality of the skin has perhaps more to do with its lasting beauty than anything else, for there is no other feature that so depends upon being fostered, cherished, nourished, and improved. There is no organ of the body more appreciative of good treatment or one that shows the effect of carelessness, indifference, and abuse so readily. Indeed, the skin is a notorious talebearer, registering in unmistakable terms the state of one's health and the habits, good or bad, to which one is addicted. It might be said, too, that it declares one's native heath, as, for instance, the bright, fair complexion of English women as compared to Americans; in the same way, the country lass is easily distinguishable from her city-bred cousin.

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Which emphasizes the well-known fact that climate has a marked effect upon the skin—the moist air of Great Britain being especially salubrious—and that fresh, pure air and sunlight in abundance will achieve more toward the improvement of a colorless skin than any amount of drugging. This truth is known to every schoolgirl, yet it is little valued. Women who house themselves all day and only venture out at night are usually as colorless and as thin-blooded as fish, while those who spend the greater part of their time in open-air exercise of some sort take on the brilliancy of tropic birds. The color thus acquired gives vigor to the blood, owing to the large quantity of oxygen and electricity inhaled from the air as the blood passes through the lungs.

The day has passed when pallid, anæmic, sickly faces were fashionable. We cannot hope that the day will come when cosmetics shall be entirely discarded, because they are powerful beauty aids and have their rightful place on every dressing table, but we *can* hope that natural complexions will be given greater care and opportunity to flourish, and that cosmetics will be employed as they should be to enhance the natural charms of a good skin instead of to disguise a poor one or even to accentuate it. Some years ago, the faces of fashionable women assumed a violet hue, owing to the liberal use of cosmetics containing this shade. As the chemical color of arsenic is violet, the effect upon a delicate skin of the continued use of such preparations can well be imagined.

Why women have so little consideration for the skin upon their countenances is hard to understand; they seem to fail entirely to take into account that a fine, clear, and brilliant complexion tells a story of radiant health and everything that this presupposes—a good digestion, an equable temper, staying powers. They prefer to change the

skin, chameleonlike, to suit its setting, the outer embellishments of the moment; in other words, they select their complexions much as the lady did her wall paper:

"I think we must really decide upon this one, Aubrey. It matches your socks so beautifully."

The inherent texture of the skin has much to do with its beauty, that which is fine grained remaining so, unless grossly abused, into old age; even a coarse skin is not objectionable when suffused with healthy color. But no matter what the character of the complexion, its beauty depends upon the healthful performance of the chief functions of the body, notably digestion and the discharge of waste products. It is obviously impossible for the skin to remain fair when no attention is given the diet unless the stomach protests. Even then, the ignorance displayed as to what constitutes a suitable diet—food that does not tax the digestive powers and that is easily assimilated—is well illustrated by the story of the little girl who timidly asked the drug clerk for a package of pink dye.

"What do you want it for," responded the clerk, "woolen or cotton goods?"

"Neither," said the child. "It's for ma's stomach. The doctor said she'd have to dye it [diet] and she wants it a pretty color."

Unless the diet has been carefully selected and the daily habits regularly supervised, a young girl's complexion is very apt to show the mischief set up by clogged and hampered internal machinery as soon as the years of adolescence are reached. This is regrettable, because of the many important changes going on in the system at this time; before these are firmly established, skin troubles may have made great headway, and the clear transparency of a fresh complexion be forever lost. Blemishes that appear at this stage are sometimes



Study your individual complexion *needs*—

never completely eradicated, but leave their impress throughout life.

The glands naturally have a powerful effect upon the skin, but none are so important in this direction as the liver. We are not apt to think what effect its manifold actions have upon the complexion even after the skin becomes discolored. It must take on a greenish hue to awaken us to a realization that this marvelous organ is being overworked. A "muddy" complexion, or one showing coffee-colored areas, or one that has gradually become yellow—not ivory—calls out loudly that some hygienic treatment be given the liver.

No amount of "peeling" or "bleaching" will redeem the complexion unless internal treatment is vigorously pursued. This need not be heroic—indeed, correctives are of the simplest nature—but must extend over a long period. On arising, a cup of very hot water containing the juice of half a lemon should be slowly sipped. Fruits that contain laxative juices, vegetables that contain a high percentage of coloring matter, such as rhubarb, tomatoes, squash, and

everything that is green of an edible nature, are gratefully received by this organ. A torpid liver does not take kindly to milk, unless highly diluted with water, to coffee, tea, eggs, fresh bread, pastries, sweets, and other heavy, indigestible foods. So the diet should be simple in the extreme, with an abundance of good spring water. The liver also enjoys taking exercise; deep abdominal breathing, which subjects it to massage, horseback riding, and brisk walking in all kinds of weather will be followed by a healthy activity that will quickly show itself in a substitution of pink for yellow upon the countenance.

Of course, where chronic indigestion, with consequent impoverishment of the blood and a feebly acting liver, exists, a combination obtains that calls for very stringent measures. There is a story of the old days of Scotland very applicable here. A worthy magistrate of an ancient city had before him an individual charged with popery. The examination proceeded as follows:

"Are ye a papist?"

"Aye."

"Are ye a priest?"

"Aye."

"Are ye a Jesuit?"

"Aye."

Whereupon, the magistrate, overcome with the horror of the situation, exclaimed:

"Eh, man, that's the de'il and a'!"

Chronic indigestion is the most frequent cause of facial blemishes. The resulting impoverishment of the blood causes a sickly pallor, while a feebly acting liver gives rise to discolorations of the skin, an assemblage that may well be summed up in the vivid exclamation of the dour Scot.

A good complexion, then, is something more than skin deep.

The question is often asked: "Shall soap and water be used upon the face?" That depends on the character of both. Soft water and an absolutely pure soap are very cleansing. A lather formed with hot water and a fine French soap, or genuine Castile soap, rubbed gently, but deeply with the finger tips into the skin, has a remarkably solvent effect upon the bacteria-laden sebaceous matter and dust that accumulate on the skin.

If this method is too drying or irritating, there are the meals beloved by the Italians and the French. Why Americans do not take more kindly to the delights of facial meal baths is a never-ending source of mild wonderment to European women. These local baths are very cleansing, penetrating deeply into the pores and absorbing waste. Then, too, they are remarkably soothing and bleaching, refining the texture of the skin and imparting to it a soft, velvety smoothness. Meal baths are particularly beneficial to oily complexions. Thin, delicate, sensitive skins, especially when dry, as they are very apt to be, need lubrication with creams and the like. After the soap-and-water bath, a little face cream of some sort should always be applied; otherwise the skin wrinkles or ages prematurely, and there is nothing more fatal to "looks" than a dried-out skin.

The face, like any other part of the body, resents treatment that is not suited to its needs, and here,

too, "what is one man's meat is another man's poison." For this reason, intelligent women whose skin becomes harsh and yellow when washed with soap and water—and cannot like a piece of linen be rinsed and blued and hung out in the sun to bleach—forever eschew this method and apply cleansing creams and emollients. Of these there are, of course, an endless variety, every woman having her favorite make and perfume. Many prefer compounding their own preparations, and this is a capital thing to do, because then one may be sure of having only the purest and best ingredients.

A popular cleansing cream consists of four ounces of oil of sweet almonds, one ounce each of white wax and white vaseline, with a few drops of any preferred perfume, added after the oils have been blended in a hot-water bath and, on removal, beaten into a creamy mass while cooling. Besides its routine use, those who are careful of their complexions invariably remove dust and other matter from the face by this means when returning from a shopping



—and treat these intelligently.

tour, motoring, or any other occasion that has subjected the skin to exposure. Thus the pores are not allowed to harbor particles of dust, its admixture with secretions from the sebaceous glands giving rise in time to distressing little facial blemishes of one sort or another.

It is good practice to use an astringent lotion of some kind after the cleansing process. A little toilet water may be sprayed on the face and neck with an atomizer. French women are very fond of camphor in their toilet preparations and employ for this purpose, and as a substitute for water, a wash made of half an ounce of glycerine, a quarter of an ounce of powdered borax, and half a pint of camphor water; the whitening and mildly contracting effect of this harmless lotion is at once apparent.

After the cleansing cream, it is sometimes desirable to use a heavier preparation to protect the skin from the effect of powder—the too liberal employment of which causes enlargement of the pores—and also to guard against the possibility of chapping from cutting winds. Fastidious women like, for this purpose, a disappearing cream that leaves no trace. Here is one of many: One ounce of white wax, seven ounces of sweet oil of almonds, one-half ounce of cocoa butter, two ounces of rose water, and one dram of mecca balsam.

Very few, other than stage beauties, appreciate the value of warm milk baths for the development of an exquisite complexion. While full baths of milk are indeed a luxury, its local use is not at all so; quite the contrary. This humble liquid softens and whitens the skin, nourishing it as well as imparting to it, in time, a delicate glow. The milk should first be heated and then patted thoroughly into the pores with bits of fine old linen or with the hand. It should be allowed to dry on and, after an hour or more, be washed off with cold water for its tonic effect.

When the skin shows an inclination to become dark—often the case with brunettes—frequent local baths of very hot water may be resorted to for the purpose of stimulating the surface circulation, as well as to soften and thereby hasten the removal of the outer cuticle. Steaming the face is pernicious; it has a tendency to enlarge the pores and coarsen the skin, and defeats its own end. By all odds, the best method is that of using good-sized face cloths made of finest Turkish toweling. These are saturated with hot water and placed over the face, one above and one below, leaving the nostrils free for breathing. As soon as they begin to cool off, the cloths are renewed, the application of moist heat being continued for half an hour. The process is one of general bodily relaxation, which in itself is highly restful, while the refreshing action upon the complexion is very gratifying. The skin becomes delightfully soft, the pores yield their contents, weary lines disappear, the eyes grow brighter under the warmth and the accelerated circulation, while the charming glow imparted remains for hours. Three such facial baths weekly, to stimulate the activity of the skin, are advised.

The pleasing effect gained by this treatment as a preliminary to the toilet is a well-known "beauty secret;" indeed, it is a simplified modern method of applying the time-honored beauty mask, resorted to in the days of the Louis', when gay and frivolous women lived only for beauty and the delights of the moment. There is not a particle of doubt that it was by means of "beauty masks" that they retained, through years of court intrigue and voluptuousness, the exquisitely transparent and delightfully fine complexions that prevailed among them.

It has been a mooted question as to what the masks consisted of, but the

preparations used under them were simply pastes of ground meals blended with creams of one kind or another. This treatment is extremely efficacious in restoring a complexion that has been neglected for years and has grown dark and discolored. A mixture to use for the purpose has come down to us from the ancient Egyptians; it consists of ground barley, three ounces; honey, one ounce; and the white of one egg, beaten to a paste. It should be applied either mask fashion on a piece of chamois skin, or spread thickly upon the face and bound on snugly with a piece of old linen. The best time to put the treatment into effect is on retiring; thus the

full benefit of the paste is derived during the undisturbed hours of sleep.

On removing the mixture in the morning, hot water should be employed—warm is too relaxing—followed by cold, to which toilet vinegar may be added. Hungary water, that wonderfully kept secret of the beautiful Elizabeth, is delightful to use in this connection.

A complexion so treated will assume the daintiness of a Maréchal Niel rose.

Regarding cosmetics—— But that is another story.

NOTE: Complexion formulæ to suit individual needs will be furnished on proper application.

Answers to Queries

BEE.—Possibly you use too much soap on your face and maybe you indulge your appetite in rich food. Use almond meal instead of soap, and then, after softly patting the face dry, apply: Boracic acid, one dram; rose water, four ounces. Keep this solution well corked and apply with a bit of absorbent cotton. Simplify your diet and drink a pint of soured milk every afternoon. If the oiliness of your skin continues, you will require further complexional aids as well as an intestinal tonic laxative. I will gladly put you in touch with these.

THEODORA.—I wish it were possible to answer you as I should like through the column of this magazine. Pronounce your beautiful, majestic name just as it should be—"Tay-a-doe-rah!" Raise your body on your toes as you do so, and lift your chin high. Do you not feel the queenly power that lies in this royal name? I do not wonder that you long for beauty. You already possess much in your nature and temperament—your charming letter tells me so. And now as to the length of time it is necessary to use the ointment I advise for the removal of superfluous hair. No one can say; its action is very slow, doubtless more so in some cases than others. Yes, it can be used upon the face *ad libitum*, and I know of nothing but the electric needle—and then only in the hands of an experienced electrotherapist—that is superior. Read in Roman history the

life of your name's progenitress and emulate her splendid qualities, pretty little Theodora from Saskatchewan!

MARY B.—Here is an old country cough cure, containing eggs, as you desired: Put four new-laid eggs in a basin and squeeze enough lemon juice over them to cover them completely. Set them in a cool place with a plate over them. In three or four days, the eggs and shells will be nearly dissolved. Beat them up with a fork, shell as well as egg; add a pound of brown sugar and a quarter of a pint of rum; pour into a bottle; and take two or three tablespoonfuls every morning.

ANDERSON.—Excessive perspiration of the feet is indeed a great annoyance. Doubtless your physical condition is not what it should be, as the quantity is excessive even for an active person. Frequent changes of hosiery and shoes are positively necessary. Try the following: Salicylic acid, twenty scruples; boric acid, one dram; talcum powder, one ounce. Avoid colored hosiery and never wear rubber overshoes longer than necessary. When the feet have been wet or chilled, bathe in cold water and rub with alcohol. An article on "Foot Woes" appeared in the June, 1915, number of this magazine. You doubtless failed to see it. Yes, I will get around to the subject again. Meanwhile, let me send you a special treatment for callosities.

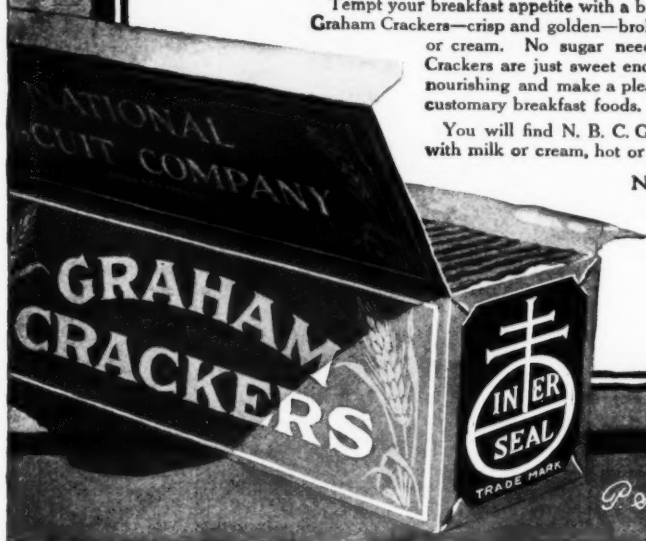
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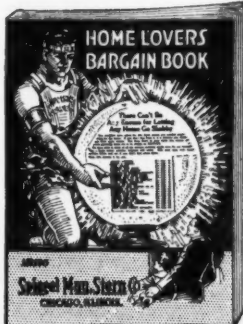
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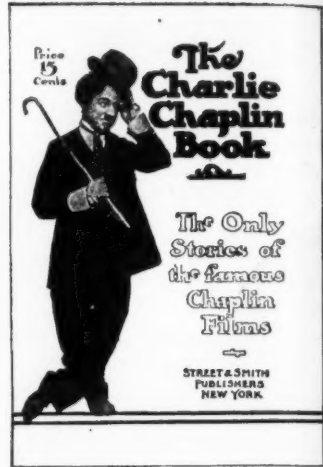
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Sarah Bernhardt "THE DIVINE SARAH"

The World's Most
Noted Actress

Sends Nuxated Iron To the French Soldiers to Help Give Them Strength, Power and Endurance

**General Gibson Says It Should
Be Used By Every Soldier
Who Goes To The Front—
That He Himself Is Hale And
Hearty In His 91st Year, He
Attributes Largely To His
Recent Use of Nux-
ated Iron**

Dr. H. B. Vail, formerly Physician in the Baltimore Hospital, Former Health Commissioner Wm. R. Kerr and others give valuable advice and information on the use of Nuxated Iron as a tonic, strength and blood builder.

"What every soldier most needs is tremendous 'stay there' strength, power and endurance, with nerves of steel and blood of iron. To produce this result, there is nothing in my experience which I have found so valuable as organic iron—Nuxated Iron," says Dr. H. B. Vail, formerly Physician in the Baltimore Hospital and a Medical Examiner. "A large quantity of this valuable product was sent to the French soldiers by Mme. Sarah Bernhardt. I took Nuxated Iron myself to build me up after a serious case of nervous exhaustion. The effects were apparent after a few days, and within three weeks it had virtually revitalized my whole system and put me in a superb physical condition."

"If General Gibson's advice were followed and every soldier who goes to the front carried a package of Nuxated Iron in his kit, I am sure that the men would not only be better, stronger fighters, but that we would have far less sickness in the Army and much less work for the Red Cross and Army Hospitals to do. Time and again I have prescribed organic iron—Nuxated Iron—and surprised patients at the rapidity with which the weakness and general debility were replaced by a renewed feeling of strength and vitality."

General Horatio Gates Gibson says Nuxated Iron has brought back to him in good measure that old buoyancy and energy that filled his veins in 1847, when he made his triumphant entry with General Scott into the City of Mexico, and that he attributes the fact that he is hale and hearty in his 91st year, after an active military life with service in both the Mexican and Civil Wars largely to his recent use of this wonderful product.

Another remarkable case is that of General David Stuart Gordon, noted Indian fighter and hero of the battle of Gettysburg. General Gordon says: "When I became badly run down this year, I found myself totally without the physical power to 'come back' as I had done in my younger days. I tried different 'so-called tonics' without feeling any better, but finally I heard of how physicians were widely recommending organic iron to renew red blood and rebuild strength in worn-out bodies. As a result, I started taking Nuxated Iron, and within a month it had roused my weakened vital forces and made me feel strong again, giving me an endurance such as I never hoped to again possess."

Former Health Commissioner of Chicago Wm. R. Kerr said: "As Health Commissioner of the City of Chicago, I was importuned many times to recommend different medicines, mineral waters, etc. Never yet have I gone on record as favoring any particular rem-



WESTERN UNION

ORDER OF MADAM SARAH BERNHARDT TO SEND TWO THOUSAND BOTTLES OF NUXATED IRON FOR SOLDIERS TO HOSPITAL CONNECTED WITH RACHEL BOYER REDWOODS
HAS BEEN EXECUTED PARTLY TO AMERICAN AMBULANCE

PHARMACIE NORMALE.

edy. But in the case of Nuxated Iron, I feel an exception should be made to the rule. From my own experience with it, I feel that it is such a valuable remedy that it ought to be used in every hospital and prescribed by every physician in this country, and if my endorsement shall induce anemic, nervous, run-down men and women to take Nuxated Iron, and receive the wonderful tonic benefits which I have received, I shall feel greatly gratified that I made an exception to my life-long rule in recommending it."

Dr. E. Sauer, a Boston physician, who has studied both in this country and great European Medical Institutions, said: "If people would only take Nuxated Iron when they feel weak or run-down, instead of dosing themselves with habit-forming drugs, stimulants and alcoholic beverages, I am convinced that in this way they could ward off disease, preventing it becoming organic in thousands of cases, and thereby the lives of thousands might be saved who now die every year from pneumonia, grippé, kidney, liver, heart trouble and other dangerous maladies. Thousands of people suffer from iron deficiency and do not know it. If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of Nuxated Iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained."

NOTE—Nuxated Iron, which is so strongly endorsed by Mme. Sarah Bernhardt, the world's most noted actress, and which has been used with such surprising results by Generals Gibson and Gordon, and former Health Commissioner Kerr of Chicago, and which is prescribed and recommended by physicians in such a great variety of cases, is not a patent medicine, nor secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach; on the contrary, it is a most potent remedy in nearly all forms of indigestion, as well as for nervous, run-down conditions. The manufacturers have such great confidence in Nuxated Iron, that they offer to forfeit \$100.00 to any Charitable Institution if they cannot take any man or woman under sixty who lacks iron and increase their strength 100 per cent. or over in four weeks' time, provided they have no serious gastric trouble. They also offer to refund your money if it does not at least double your strength and endurance in ten days' time. It is dispensed by all good druggists.

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WANT TO GROW HAIR?

If you desire to grow hair on that bald spot, or to stop falling hair, or completely banish dandruff, you should test the true value of Koskott. We offer

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W. H. COPELAND (photo above) reports: "My hair is improving right along, the bald spot looks darker; I am thankful I heard of Koskott."

"For eight or nine years I have been a bald-headed man: the top of my head was as bare as my hand. New hair is growing again; it is the most wonderful thing I ever saw."—Lee Fish, Clayton Co., Iowa.

"I can no longer find the place where the bald spot was; the hair is as long there as on any other place of the head."—Matt Bagley, Itasca Co., Minn.

"My hair has quit falling out, my scalp itches no more and new hair is growing thickly."—Mrs. J. Lundeen, Multnomah Co., Oregon.

"After being bald 20 years, my head is mostly covered with new hair; am well pleased."—Geo. Van Wyck, Union Co., N. J.

"The baldness on my head has entirely disappeared, being covered with hair, by use of Koskott Hair Grower."—Prof. C. E. Bowman, Baltimore City Co., Maryland.

"For Growing hair and making it beautiful, there is nothing like Koskott, for my hair

is now a surprise to all my friends. I am telling everybody of your wonderful hair grower."—Mrs. W. Rabiger, Allegheny Co., Pa.

"Koskott has started a new growth of hair on my head."—R. C. Cunningham, Abbeville Co., S. C.

"The hair is now about an inch long on my head where there was not a hair in 30 years; Koskott did it."—J. J. Ellis, Minnesota.

"Four months ago my scalp was bare, now it is covered with a nice growth of hair and it is growing nicely."—W. C. Coleman, Red River Co., La.

"One sample box and one full box of Koskott have grown hair on my head where I was perfectly bald."—A. W. Bowser, Butler Co., Pa.

"I was bald and never could find anything to bring the hair back until I used Koskott."—Esther Arnett, Wallace Co., Ky.

We offer to send you a testing box of Koskott FREE, postpaid. It is probably different from anything you had ever used on your scalp before. It is inexpensive because concentrated. We know that Koskott has surprised and delighted many who were losing or had lost their hair and feared they must remain bald throughout life.

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GROW HAIR! You need only to ask for a free box of Koskott—a postcard will do. It will come to you promptly, with full directions, and you can soon decide what it will do for you.

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